MARVEL

EPIC COLLECTION

AVENGERS

TAKING A.I.M.

HARRAS • PÉREZ • DEODATO JR. • MOORE • CLARK

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"ECHOES OF HISTORY"

AVENGERS #379, OCTOBER 1994
"THE LEGENDS AND THE LOST"

AVENGERS #380, NOVEMBER 1994
"ERRAND OF MERCY"

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AVENGERS #382, JANUARY 1995
"OFFERINGS"
"THE DOOR: SYNCHRONICITY, I"

MARVEL DOUBLE FEATURE: AVENGERS/GIANT-MAN #379,
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"IT'S THEM AGAIN!!"

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NOVEMBER 1994
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AVENGERS #388, JULY 1995
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MARVEL COMICS
378
SEP
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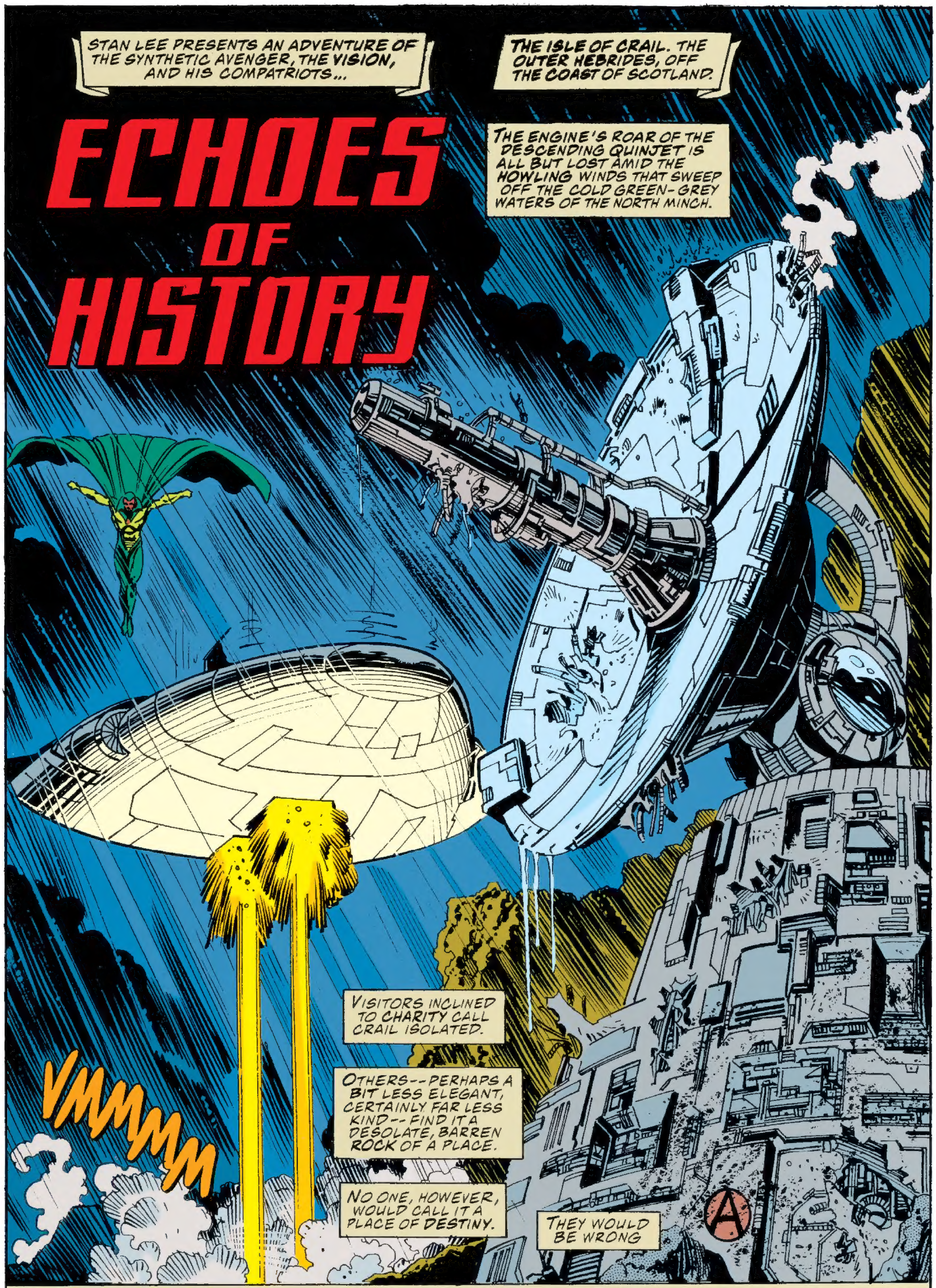
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES!
AVENGERS
FALLOUT

[redacted]

ECHOES OF HISTORY


STAN LEE PRESENTS AN ADVENTURE OF THE SYNTHETIC AVENGER, THE VISION, AND HIS COMPATRIOTS...
THE ISLE OF CRAIL. THE OUTER HEBRIDES, OFF THE COAST OF SCOTLAND.
THE ENGINE'S ROAR OF THE DESCENDING QUINJET IS ALL BUT LOST AMID THE HOWLING WINDS THAT SWEEP OFF THE COLD GREEN-GREY WATERS OF THE NORTH MINCH.
VMMMMM
VISITORS INCLINED TO CHARITY CALL CRAIL ISOLATED.
OTHERS--PERHAPS A BIT LESS ELEGANT, CERTAINLY FAR LESS KIND--FIND IT A DESOLATE, BARREN ROCK OF A PLACE.
NO ONE, HOWEVER, WOULD CALL IT A PLACE OF DESTINY.
THEY WOULD BE WRONG
A

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TWENTY-SEVEN HOURS AGO, THIS TRACKING STATION--
--ONE OF SEVERAL THE MIGHTY AVENGERS HAVE ERECTED ACROSS THE GLOBE--CEASED TRANSMITTING DATA.
THIS GROUP OF HEROES HAS JOURNEYED HERE TO FIND OUT WHY.
COULDN'T YOU AVENGERS HAVE FOUND A MORE PLEASANT SPOT TO BUILD YOUR TRACKERS, VISION?
I'VE SEEN DEAD SUNS WITH MORE APPEAL.
LOCALES ARE CHOSEN FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, DEATHCRY.
HOWEVER, A PLEASING SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT IS NOT ONE OF THEM.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I BELIEVE AN INTERIOR INSPECTION OF THE DAMAGE IS REQUIRED...
PHILIP, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
JUST A LITTLE DIZZY, MAGGIE.
FUNNY... IT HIT ME AS SOON AS WE LANDED.
YES, I FELT A SLIGHT DISORIENTATION AS WELL.
WELL, IT WAS A ROUGH RIDE IN, OUTRACING THAT STORM FRONT.
I'LL CONTACT THE AVENGERS BACK IN NEW YORK, TELL THEM WE MADE IT...
?
FUNNY. I CAN'T GET A SIGNAL. MUST BE THE STORM.
I MUST DISPUTE YOUR CONCLUSION, SWORDSMAN.
AVENGER RADIO BANDS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY THIS WEATHER SYSTEM.
THE SIGNAL IS, HOWEVER, INDISPUTABLY LOST.
ALSO, MY PROBE REVEALED THAT THE DAMAGE TO THE TRACKER WAS BOTH DELIBERATE AND EXACTING.
IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY NATURAL PHENOMENA AS WE HAD SPECULATED.
BUT WHO--?!
KA-BLAM!
ARRGHH!!
DEATHCRY!!

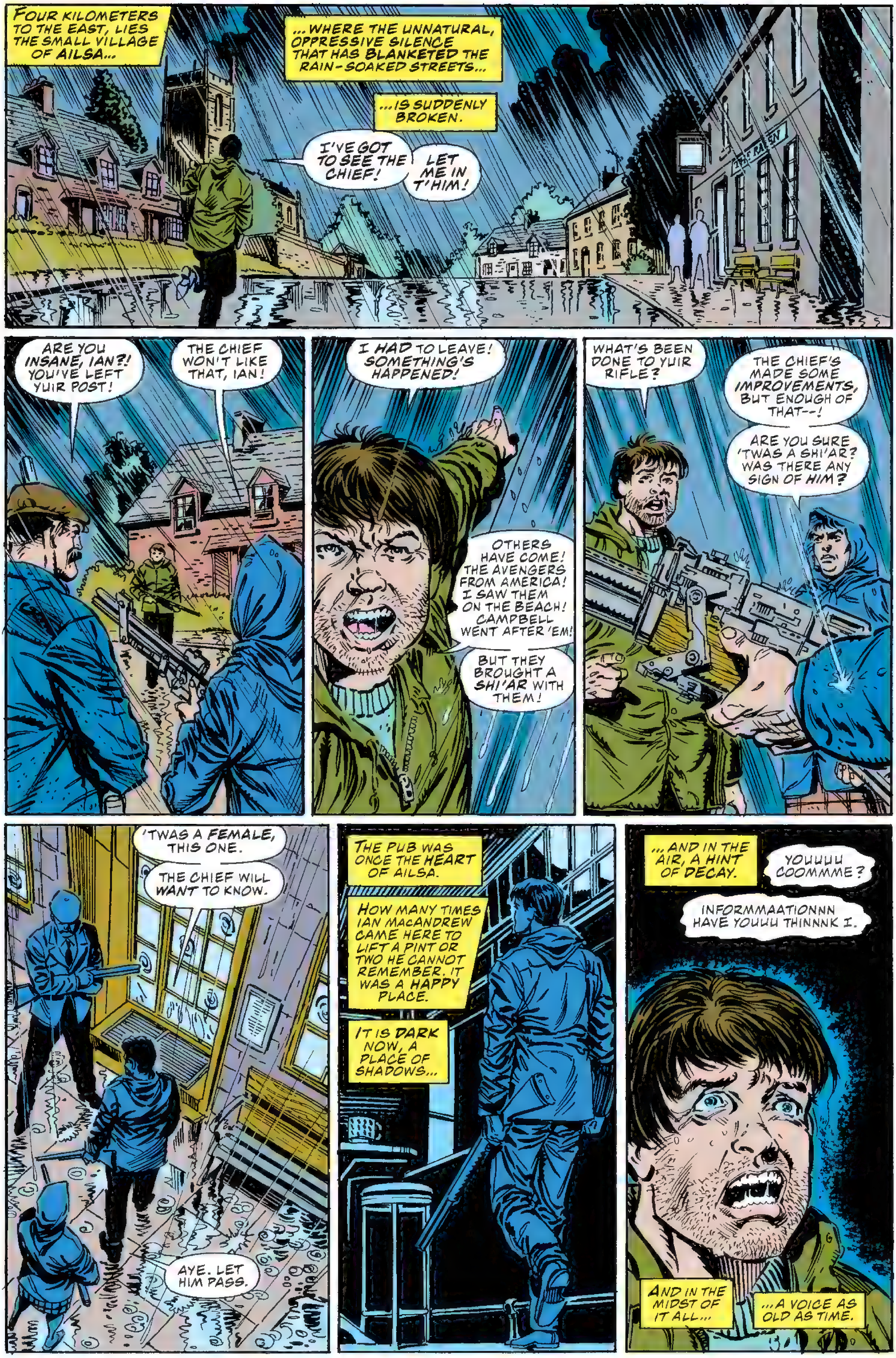
ANOTHER SHOT--!
DEATHCRY, KEEP DOWN--
--I'LL GET IT!
RIKKO-SHEET!
SHARRA'S CLAWS--I'M BLEEDING?!
MAGDALENE, ATTEND TO DEATHCRY.
I'LL SEE TO OUR ASSAILANT.
I HATE BLEEDING!
YOU ARE NOT EVEN HIDING?
INTERESTING.
BLAM!
BULLETS ARE INEFFECTUAL AGAINST ONE WHO CAN BECOME AS INTANGIBLE AS THE AIR--
SWAT
--AND RE-SOLIDIFY WITH A THOUGHT.
MY SOLAR BEAMS WILL MAKE SURE YOUR WEAPON WILL HARM NO ONE ELSE.
SSIZZ
NOW, TELL ME, HUMAN--
--WHY DID YOU FIRE UPON US?
WHY?

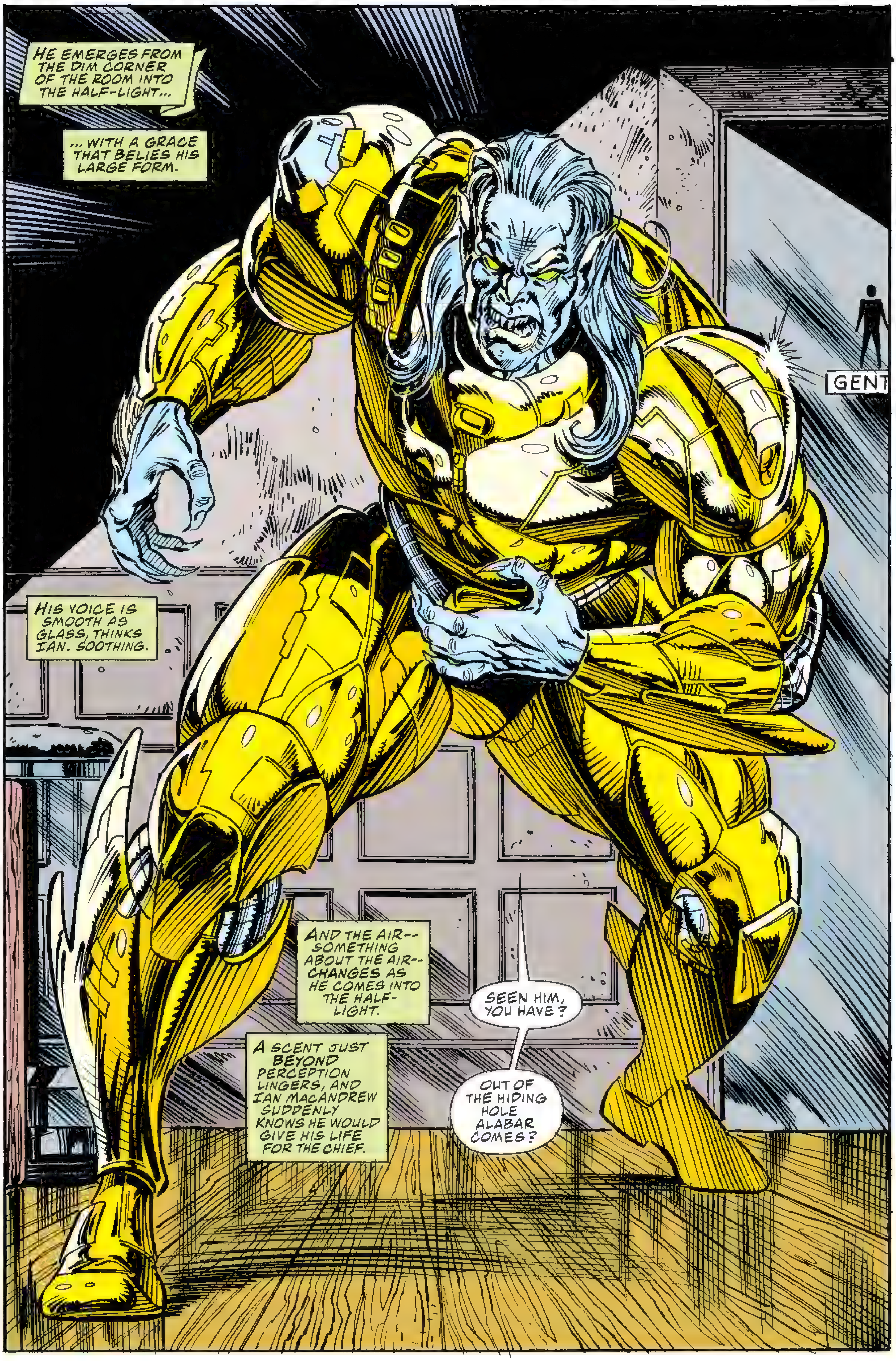
NOW THERE'S A QUESTION I WANT ANSWERED!
VISION, I COULD NOT STOP THE CHILD.
SHE INSISTED HER WOUND WAS SLIGHT AND THAT YOU NOT FACE THIS MENACE ALONE.
I UNDERSTAND, MAGDALENE.
THE MYSTERY DEEPENS. I RECOGNIZE THIS MAN FROM HIS AVENGERS FILE.
HE IS JAMES CAMPBELL, AN ENGINEER HIRED BY THE AVENGERS YEARS AGO TO OVERSEE THE CRAIL TRACKING STATION. ANTHONY STARK HIMSELF SUGGESTED HIM WITH THE HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION.
NOTHING IN HIS RECORD WOULD SUGGEST THIS ABERRANT BEHAVIOR.
D...DON'T YE SEE?!
I HAD NO CHOICE... NONE!
SHE WAS WITH YE!
SHI'AR!!
DEATHCRY?
THIS IS ILLOGICAL.
ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE ON EARTH KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE SHI'AR RACE.
HOW COULD YOU HAVE LEARNED OF THEM?
ARRGHH!
O LORD-- HE KNOWS! HE KNOWS!
MR. CAMPBELL...?
LISTEN, MAN-- I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YE! I-- I DIDN'T!
YE'VE GOT TO HELP US! HE HAS US ALL!
"HE," MR. CAMPBELL? WHO?
HOW CAN WE HELP YOU, SIR?

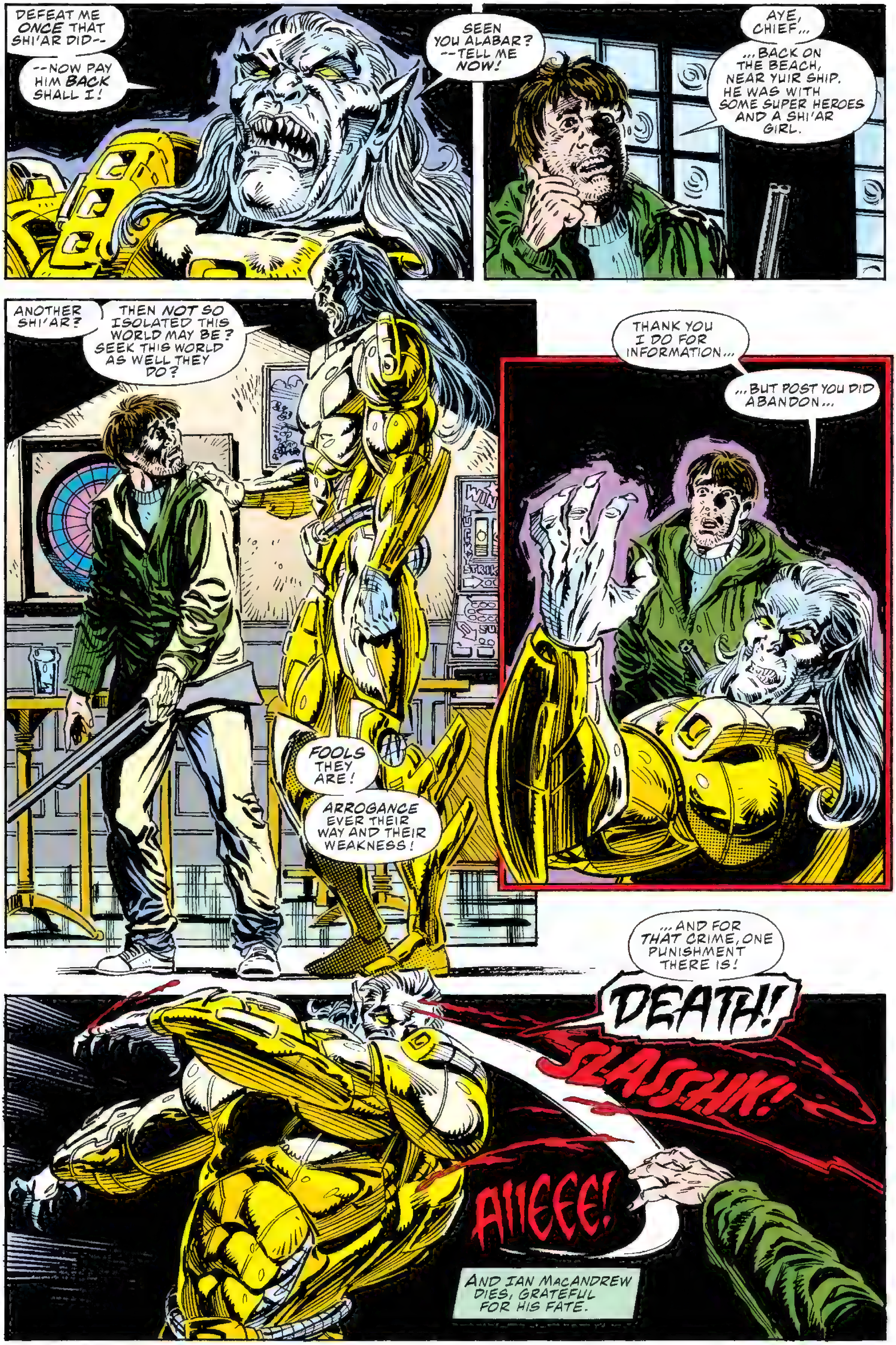
IT'S TOO LATE... TOO LATEEEE...
UHHHHH!
MR. CAMPBELL...?
?
HE IS DEAD, AND I CAN FIND NO PHYSIOLOGICAL REASON WHY.
CURIOUS.
A MAN HAS JUST DIED IN YOUR ARMS, SYNTHEZOID...
...AND ALL YOU FEEL IS CURIOSITY?!
BY THE RINGS, VISION! BUT YOUR BLOOD RUNS...
...COLD.
DEATH-CRY?
CHILD WHAT IS IT?
I THOUGHT I SENSED SOMETHING WHEN WE LANDED HERE.
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT... NEVER DREAMED--!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, GIRL?
BY THE FIFTH RING!
SO YOU SEE IT, TOO.

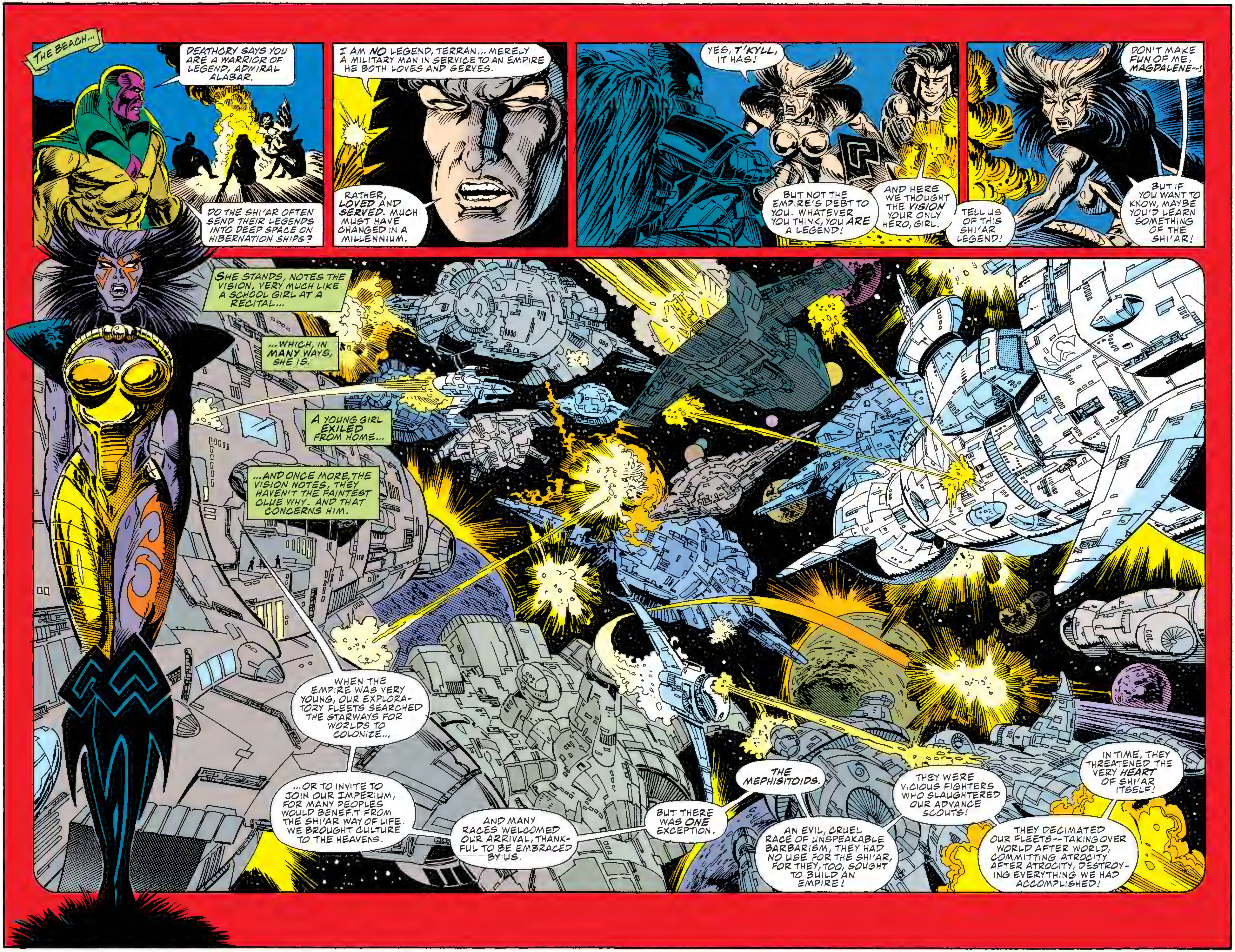
A SHIP--?! BUT IT IS *IMMENSE!*
DEATHCRY, YOU *RECOGNIZE* IT?
I DO.
BY SHARRA'S BLOODY CLAWS, I *DO!*
AND *BECAUSE* I DO, I *KNOW* WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE AS *QUICKLY* AS POSSIBLE!
DEATHCRY... YOU SEEM UNCHARACTERISTICALLY UNNERVED BY YOUR DISCOVERY.
WHAT FRIGHTENS YOU?
DOES IT *MATTER,* VISION?!
JUST TRUST ME-- IF WE STAY HERE, WE'RE *DEAD*... ALL OF US!
HAVE FAITH, CHILDE OF SHI'AR.
WHA--?!
NO!!

DOES MY APPEARANCE TRULY *TERRIFY* YOU SO?
I MUST CONFESS, I FIND *YOUR* UNEXPECTED PRESENCE IN THIS DESOLATE PLACE MOST COMFORTING.
I HAVE PRAYED TO SHARRA FOR MANY THINGS, BUT YOU ARE A GIFT *UNLOOKED* FOR--
--AND, THUS, *DOUBLY* APPRECIATED.
BY KRYTHRI--!
IT *CAN'T* BE... BUT IT *IS*!
YOU ARE *T'KYLL ALABAR*, ADMIRAL OF THE *FIRST* IMPERIAL *FLEET*, AREN'T YOU?
I AM.
TELL ME, GIRL, HOW *CAME* YOU TO THIS PLANET? FROM THE STARS, I KNOW WE ARE BOTH *FAR* FROM HOME.
THIS CAN'T BE! THIS IS A *DREAM*, ISN'T IT?
BECAUSE IF *YOU* LIVE, THEN HE--
--HE--!
YES, CHILD. THE *MEPHISITOID* IS FREE ONCE MORE.
BUT YOU MUST NOT GIVE IN TO FEAR-- FOR *FEAR* HAS EVER BEEN THEIR *KEY*!
O-OF COURSE. FORGIVE ME, MILORD.
THAT'S BETTER.
NOW TELL ME, HOW *LONG* HAS IT BEEN?
NEAR TWELVE-HUNDRED YEARS.
BY SHARRA! SO *LONG*! THE EMPIRE OWES ME MUCH!

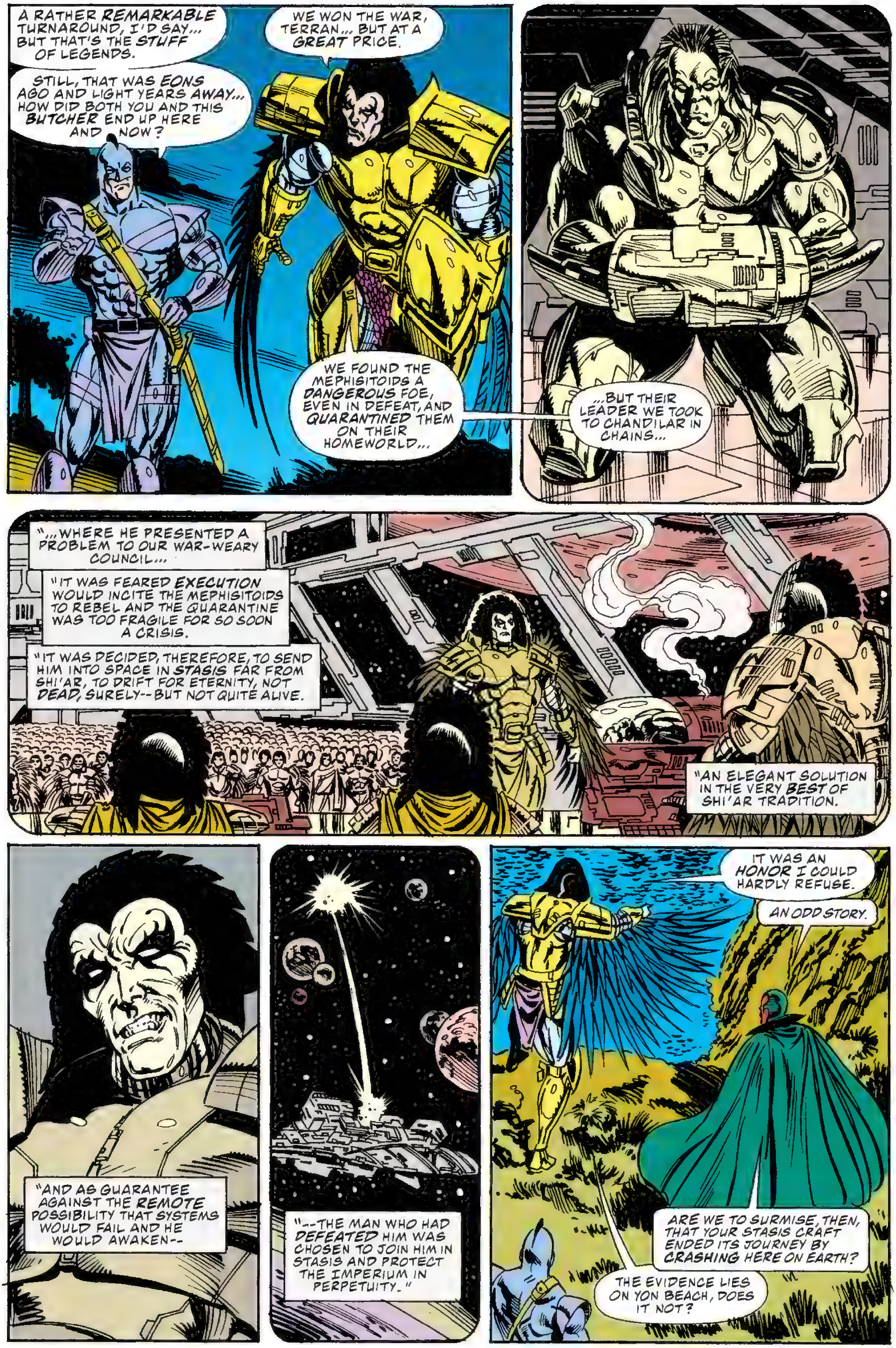

FOUR KILOMETERS TO THE EAST, LIES THE SMALL VILLAGE OF AILSA...
...WHERE THE UNNATURAL, OPPRESSIVE SILENCE THAT HAS BLANKETED THE RAIN-SOAKED STREETS...
...IS SUDDENLY BROKEN.
I'VE GOT TO SEE THE CHIEF!
LET ME IN T'HIM!
THE RAVEN
ARE YOU INSANE, IAN?! YOU'VE LEFT YUIR POST!
THE CHIEF WON'T LIKE THAT, IAN!
I HAD TO LEAVE! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED!
OTHERS HAVE COME! THE AVENGERS FROM AMERICA! I SAW THEM ON THE BEACH! CAMPBELL WENT AFTER 'EM!
BUT THEY BROUGHT A SHI'AR WITH THEM!
WHAT'S BEEN DONE TO YUIR RIFLE?
THE CHIEF'S MADE SOME IMPROVEMENTS, BUT ENOUGH OF THAT--!
ARE YOU SURE 'TWAS A SHI'AR? WAS THERE ANY SIGN OF HIM?
'TWAS A FEMALE, THIS ONE.
THE CHIEF WILL WANT TO KNOW.
AYE. LET HIM PASS.
THE PUB WAS ONCE THE HEART OF AILSA.
HOW MANY TIMES IAN MACANDREW CAME HERE TO LIFT A PINT OR TWO HE CANNOT REMEMBER. IT WAS A HAPPY PLACE.
IT IS DARK NOW, A PLACE OF SHADOWS...
...AND IN THE AIR, A HINT OF DECAY.
YOUUUU COOMMME?
INFORMMAATIONNN HAVE YOUUU THINNNK I.
AND IN THE MIDST OF IT ALL...
...A VOICE AS OLD AS TIME.

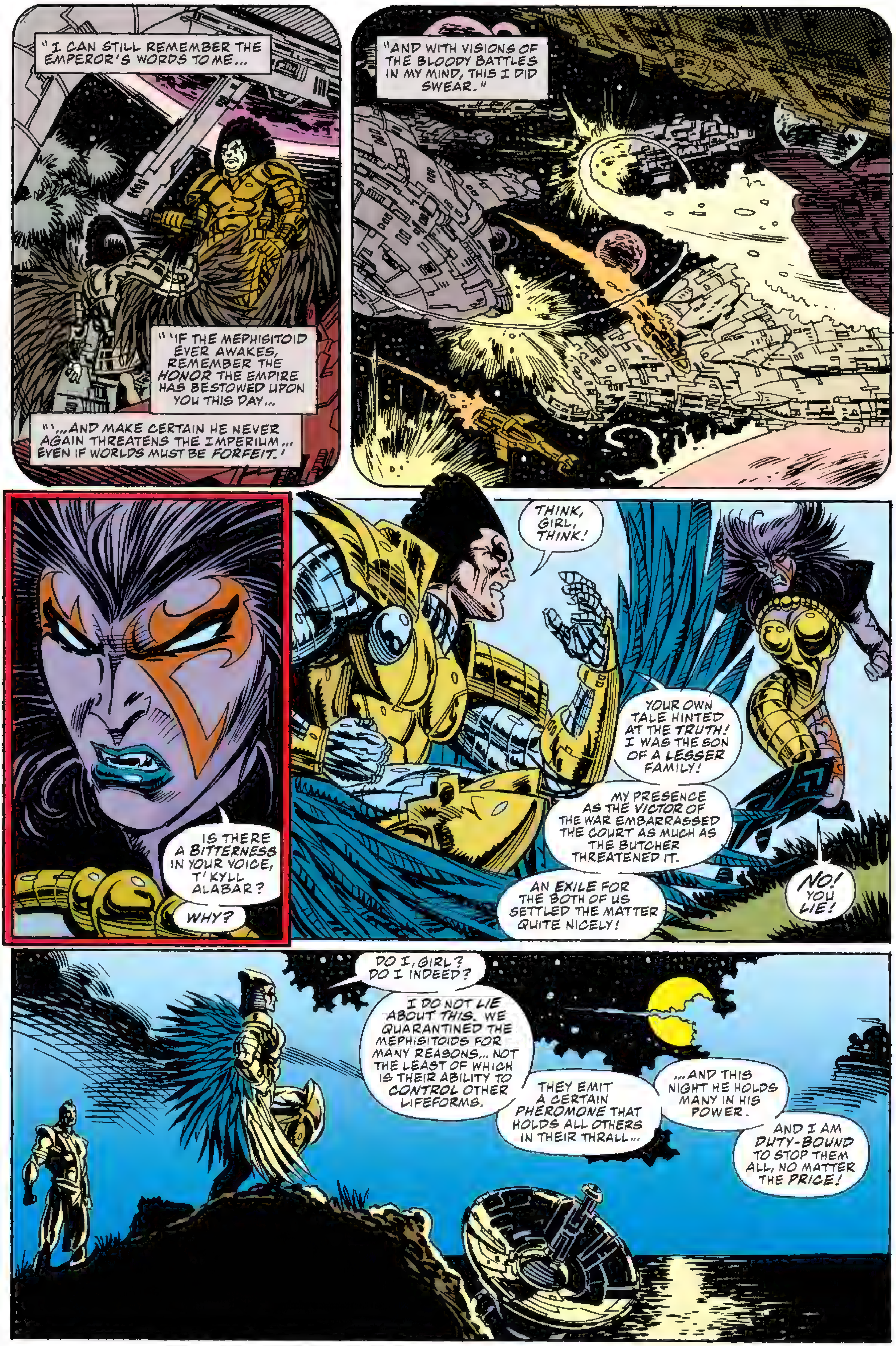

HE EMERGES FROM THE DIM CORNER OF THE ROOM INTO THE HALF-LIGHT...
...WITH A GRACE THAT BELIES HIS LARGE FORM.
GENT
HIS VOICE IS SMOOTH AS GLASS, THINKS IAN. SOOTHING.
AND THE AIR-- SOMETHING ABOUT THE AIR-- CHANGES AS HE COMES INTO THE HALF-LIGHT.
A SCENT JUST BEYOND PERCEPTION LINGERS, AND IAN MACANDREW SUDDENLY KNOWS HE WOULD GIVE HIS LIFE FOR THE CHIEF.
SEEN HIM, YOU HAVE?
OUT OF THE HIDING HOLE ALABAR COMES?

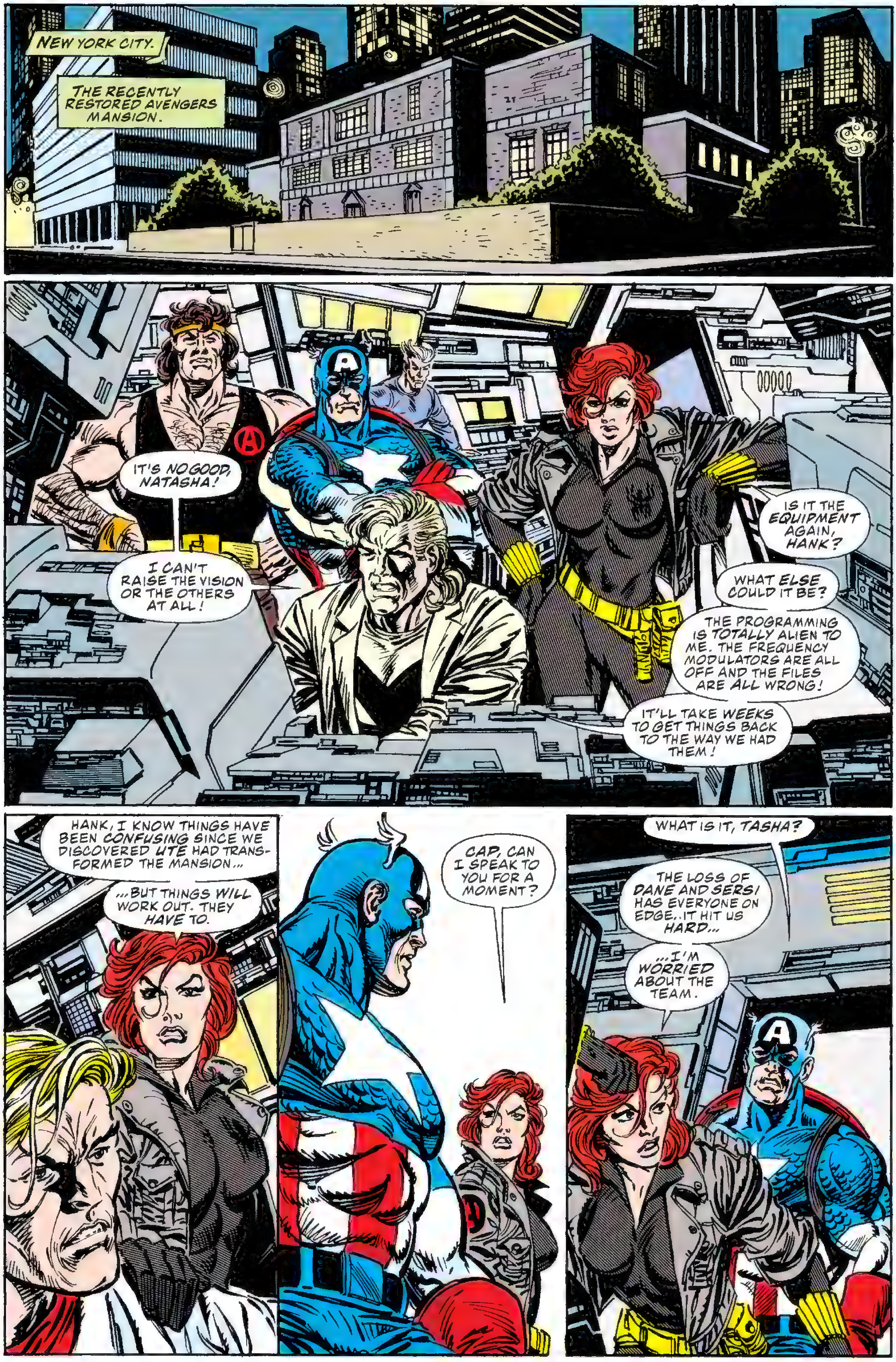

DEFEAT ME ONCE THAT SHI'AR DID--
--NOW PAY HIM BACK SHALL I!
SEEN YOU ALABAR? --TELL ME NOW!
AYE, CHIEF...
...BACK ON THE BEACH, NEAR YUIR SHIP. HE WAS WITH SOME SUPER HEROES AND A SHI'AR GIRL.
ANOTHER SHI'AR?
THEN NOT SO ISOLATED THIS WORLD MAY BE? SEEK THIS WORLD AS WELL THEY DO?
FOOLS THEY ARE!
ARROGANCE EVER THEIR WAY AND THEIR WEAKNESS!
THANK YOU I DO FOR INFORMATION...
...BUT POST YOU DID ABANDON...
...AND FOR THAT CRIME, ONE PUNISHMENT THERE IS!
DEATH!
SLASSHK!
AIIEEE!
AND IAN MACANDREW DIES, GRATEFUL FOR HIS FATE.

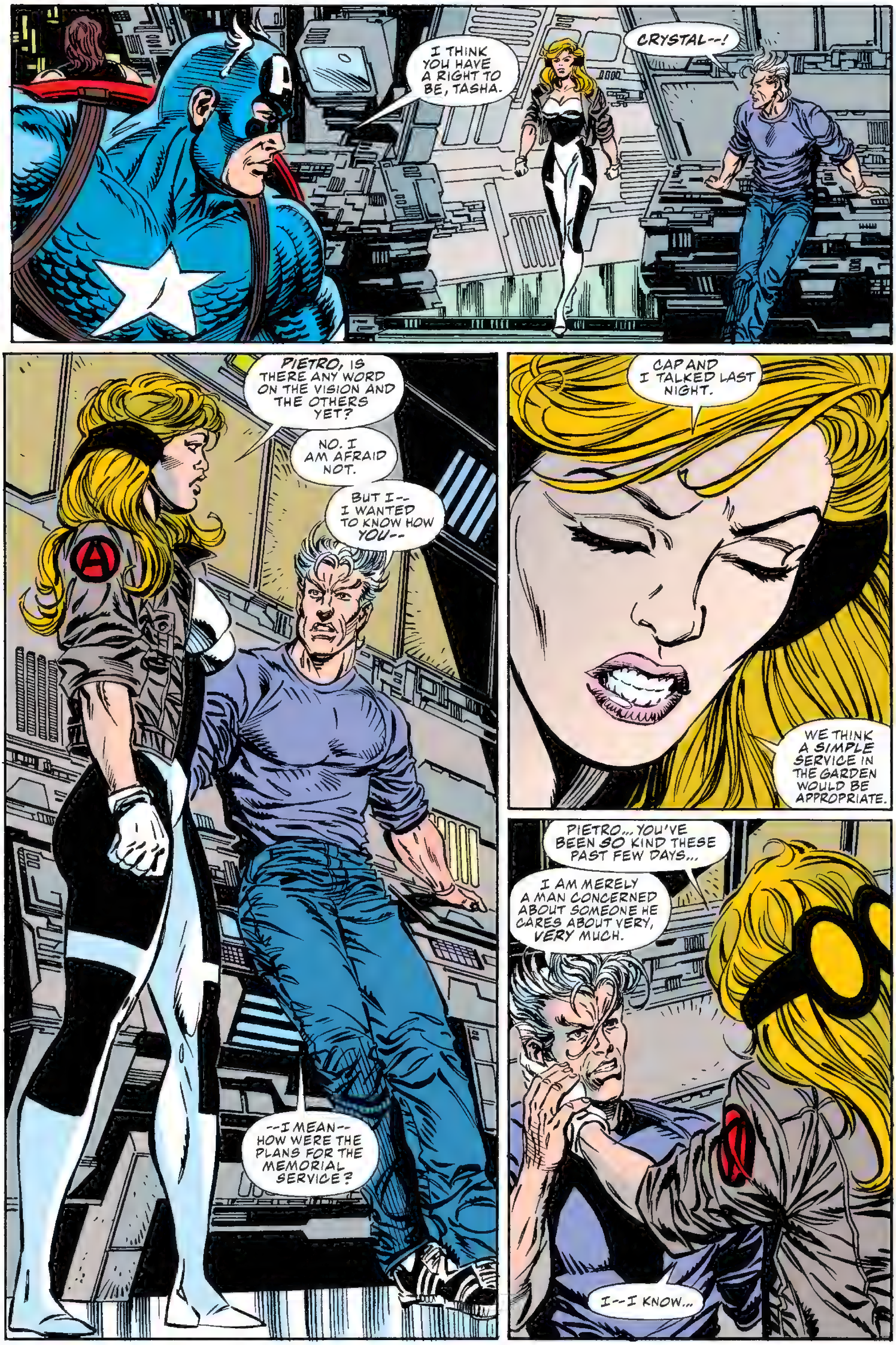

THE BEACH...
DEATHCRY SAYS YOU ARE A WARRIOR OF LEGEND, ADMIRAL ALABAR.
DO THE SHI'AR OFTEN SEND THEIR LEGENDS INTO DEEP SPACE ON HIBERNATION SHIPS?
I AM NO LEGEND, TERRAN... MERELY A MILITARY MAN IN SERVICE TO AN EMPIRE HE BOTH LOVES AND SERVES.
RATHER, LOVED AND SERVED. MUCH MUST HAVE CHANGED IN A MILLENNIUM.
YES, T'KYLL, IT HAS!
BUT NOT THE EMPIRE'S DEBT TO YOU. WHATEVER YOU THINK, YOU ARE A LEGEND!
AND HERE WE THOUGHT THE VISION YOUR ONLY HERO, GIRL.
TELL US OF THIS SHI'AR LEGEND!
DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME, MAGDALENE--!
BUT IF YOU WANT TO KNOW, MAYBE YOU'D LEARN SOMETHING OF THE SHI'AR!
SHE STANDS, NOTES THE VISION, VERY MUCH LIKE A SCHOOL GIRL AT A RECITAL...
...WHICH, IN MANY WAYS, SHE IS.
A YOUNG GIRL EXILED FROM HOME...
...AND ONCE MORE, THE VISION NOTES, THEY HAVEN'T THE FAINTEST CLUE WHY. AND THAT CONCERNS HIM.
WHEN THE EMPIRE WAS VERY YOUNG, OUR EXPLORATORY FLEETS SEARCHED THE STARWAYS FOR WORLDS TO COLONIZE...
...OR TO INVITE TO JOIN OUR IMPERIUM, FOR MANY PEOPLES WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE SHI'AR WAY OF LIFE. WE BROUGHT CULTURE TO THE HEAVENS.
AND MANY RACES WELCOMED OUR ARRIVAL, THANKFUL TO BE EMBRACED BY US.
BUT THERE WAS ONE EXCEPTION.
THE MEPHISITOIDS.
AN EVIL, CRUEL RACE OF UNSPEAKABLE BARBARISM, THEY HAD NO USE FOR THE SHI'AR, FOR THEY, TOO, SOUGHT TO BUILD AN EMPIRE!
THEY WERE VICIOUS FIGHTERS WHO SLAUGHTERED OUR ADVANCE SCOUTS!
THEY DECIMATED OUR FLEETS--TAKING OVER WORLD AFTER WORLD, COMMITTING ATROCITY AFTER ATROCITY, DESTROYING EVERYTHING WE HAD ACCOMPLISHED!
IN TIME, THEY THREATENED THE VERY HEART OF SHI'AR ITSELF!

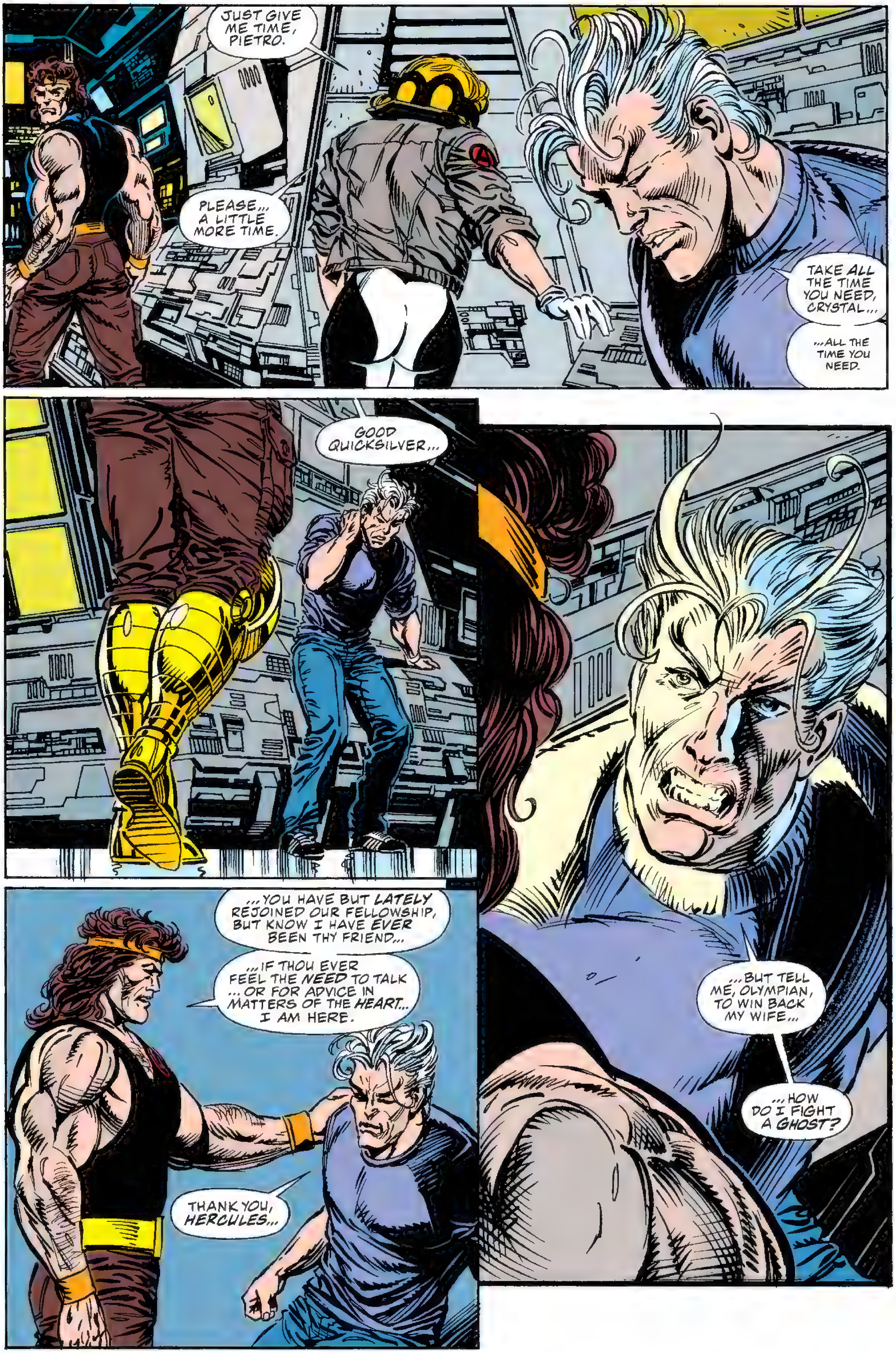
"IN BATTLE AFTER BATTLE, OUR FINEST WARRIORS FELL. THE SONS OF ANCIENT FAMILIES, THE VERY *FLOWER* OF CHANDILAR, LAY DEAD ACROSS DOZENS OF FAR-OFF WORLDS...
"...AND OUR GRIEF WAS GREAT.
"IN TIME, WE LEARNED OF THE MEPHISITOID LEADER. WE SHI'AR DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MEPHISITOID LANGUAGE --FINDING IT TOO CRUDE FOR OUR TONGUES, SO WE NEVER LEARNED THIS CREATURE'S *TRUE* NAME...
"...WE SIMPLY CALLED HIM *THE BUTCHER*.
"IN OUR DARKEST MOMENT, WITH OUR LEADERS GONE, A YOUNG MAN, THE SON OF A LESSER FAMILY ROSE THROUGH THE *DECIMATED* RANKS...
"...*T'KYLL ALABAR*.
"IN THE FINAL BATTLE, LEGEND SAYS, HE SINGLE-HANDEDLY *INSPIRED* OUR WAR-WEARY TROOPS AND LED A FINAL COUNTER ATTACK AGAINST THE MEPHISITOIDS...
"...AND THERE ON A NAMELESS WORLD, *T'KYLL* DEFEATED THE MEPHISITOIDS AND SAVED *ALL* SHI'AR."

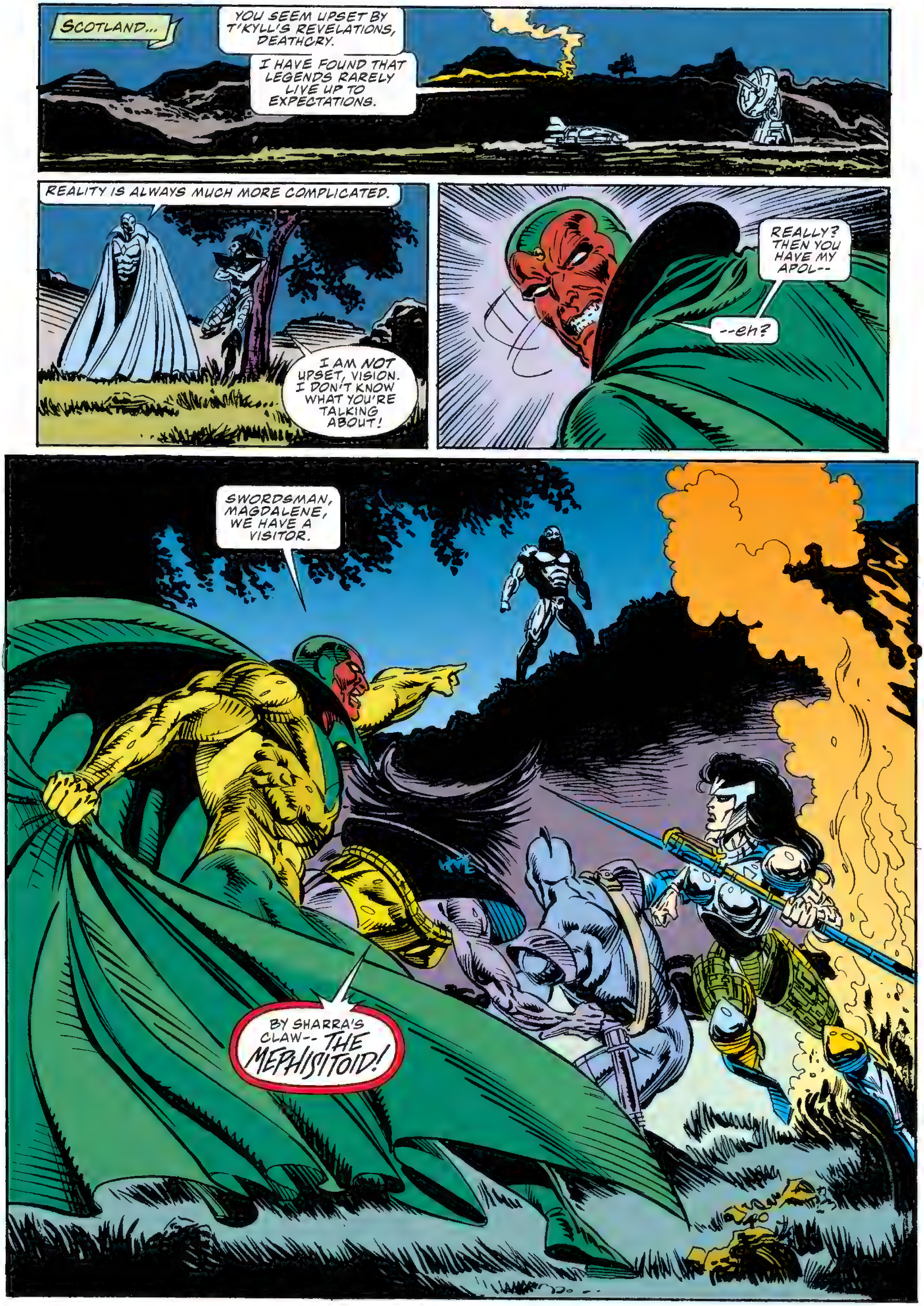

A RATHER *REMARKABLE* TURNAROUND, I'D SAY... BUT THAT'S THE *STUFF* OF LEGENDS.
WE WON THE WAR, TERRAN... BUT AT A *GREAT* PRICE.
STILL, THAT WAS *EONS* AGO AND LIGHT YEARS *AWAY*... HOW DID BOTH YOU AND THIS *BUTCHER* END UP HERE AND NOW?
WE FOUND THE MEPHISITOIDS A *DANGEROUS* FOE, EVEN IN DEFEAT, AND *QUARANTINED* THEM ON THEIR HOMEWORLD...
...BUT THEIR LEADER WE TOOK TO CHANDILAR IN CHAINS...
"...WHERE HE PRESENTED A PROBLEM TO OUR WAR-WEARY COUNCIL...
"IT WAS FEARED *EXECUTION* WOULD INCITE THE MEPHISITOIDS TO REBEL AND THE QUARANTINE WAS TOO FRAGILE FOR SO SOON A CRISIS.
"IT WAS DECIDED, THEREFORE, TO SEND HIM INTO SPACE IN *STASIS* FAR FROM SHI'AR, TO DRIFT FOR ETERNITY, NOT *DEAD*, SURELY--BUT NOT QUITE ALIVE.
"AN ELEGANT SOLUTION IN THE VERY *BEST* OF SHI'AR TRADITION.
"AND AS GUARANTEE AGAINST THE *REMOTE* POSSIBILITY THAT SYSTEMS WOULD FAIL AND HE WOULD AWAKEN--
"--THE MAN WHO HAD *DEFEATED* HIM WAS CHOSEN TO JOIN HIM IN STASIS AND PROTECT THE IMPERIUM IN PERPETUITY."
IT WAS AN *HONOR* I COULD HARDLY REFUSE.
AN ODD STORY.
ARE WE TO SURMISE, THEN, THAT YOUR STASIS CRAFT ENDED ITS JOURNEY BY *CRASHING* HERE ON EARTH?
THE EVIDENCE LIES ON YON BEACH, DOES IT NOT?

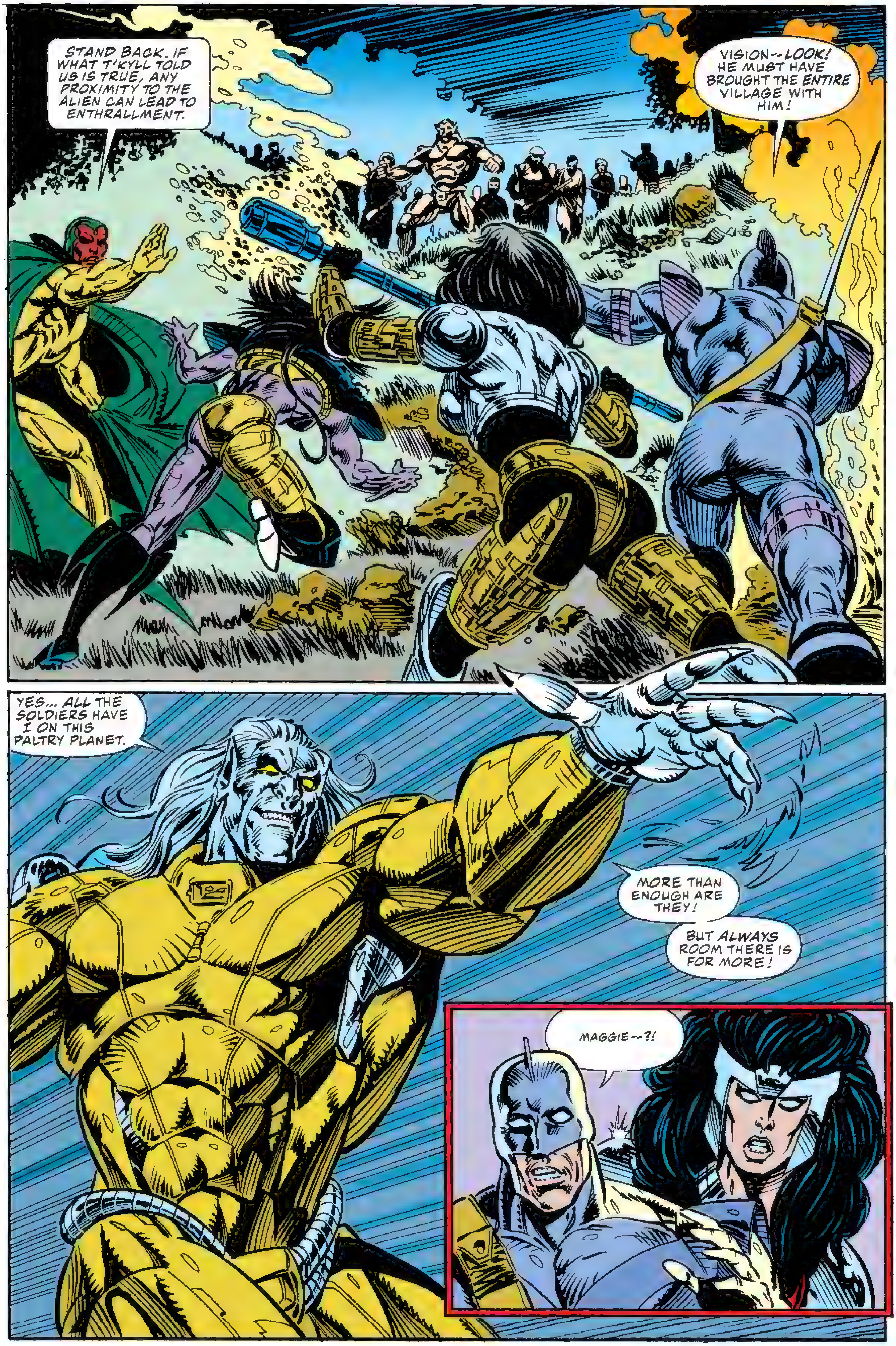

"I CAN STILL REMEMBER THE EMPEROR'S WORDS TO ME...
"'IF THE MEPHISITOID EVER AWAKES, REMEMBER THE *HONOR* THE EMPIRE HAS BESTOWED UPON YOU THIS DAY...
"'...AND MAKE CERTAIN HE NEVER AGAIN THREATENS THE IMPERIUM... EVEN IF WORLDS MUST BE *FORFEIT*.'
"AND WITH VISIONS OF THE BLOODY BATTLES IN MY MIND, THIS I DID SWEAR."
IS THERE A *BITTERNESS* IN YOUR VOICE, T'KYLL ALABAR?
WHY?
THINK, GIRL, *THINK!*
YOUR OWN TALE HINTED AT THE *TRUTH!* I WAS THE SON OF A *LESSER* FAMILY!
MY PRESENCE AS THE *VICTOR* OF THE WAR EMBARRASSED THE COURT AS MUCH AS THE BUTCHER THREATENED IT.
AN *EXILE* FOR THE BOTH OF US SETTLED THE MATTER QUITE NICELY!
NO! YOU *LIE!*
DO I, GIRL? DO I INDEED?
I DO NOT *LIE* ABOUT *THIS*. WE QUARANTINED THE MEPHISITOIDS FOR MANY REASONS... NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THEIR ABILITY TO *CONTROL* OTHER LIFEFORMS.
THEY EMIT A CERTAIN *PHEROMONE* THAT HOLDS ALL OTHERS IN THEIR THRALL...
...AND THIS NIGHT HE HOLDS MANY IN HIS POWER.
AND I AM *DUTY-BOUND* TO STOP THEM ALL, NO MATTER THE *PRICE!*

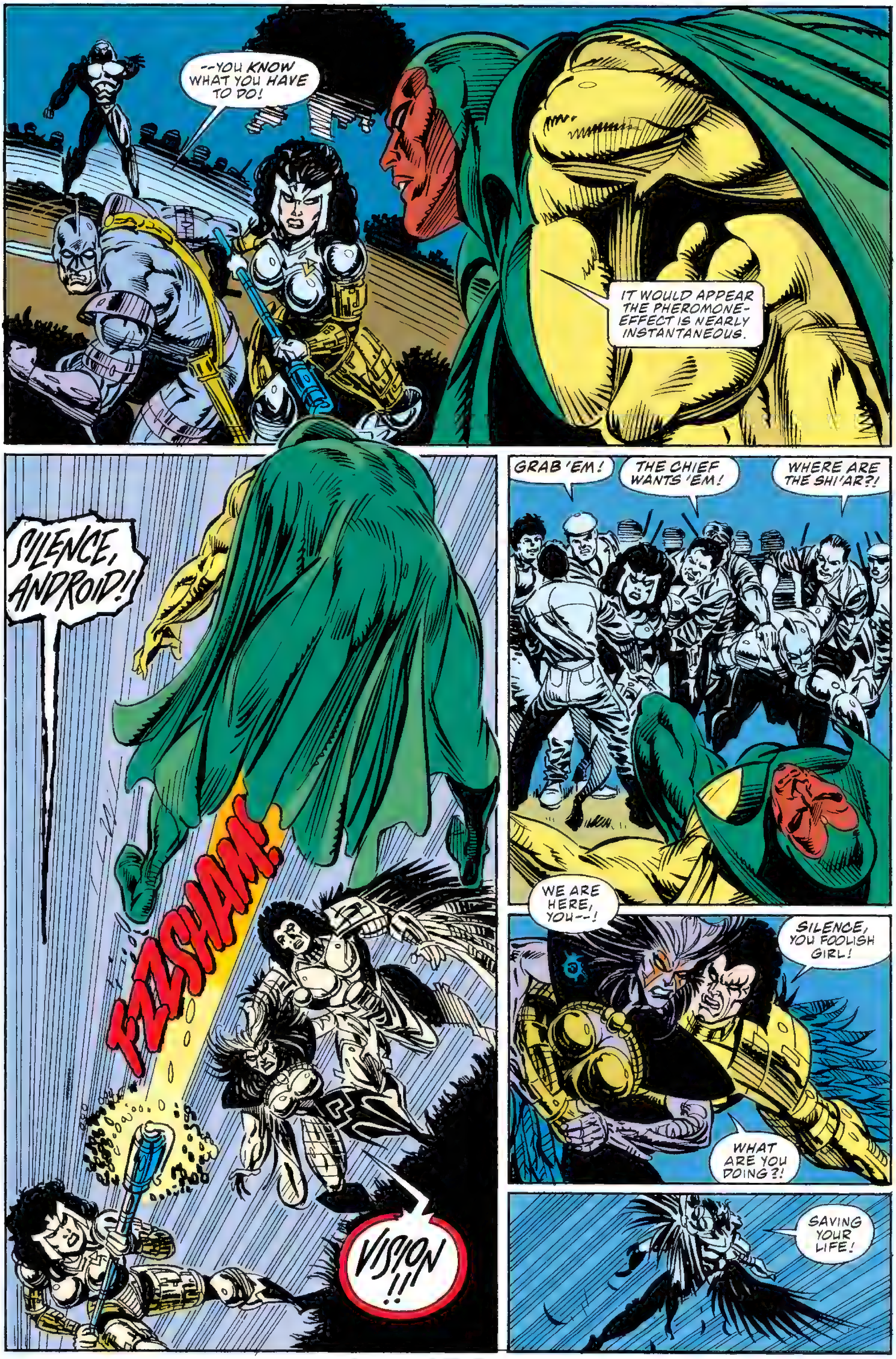

NEW YORK CITY.
THE RECENTLY RESTORED AVENGERS MANSION.
IT'S NO GOOD, NATASHA!
I CAN'T RAISE THE VISION OR THE OTHERS AT ALL!
IS IT THE EQUIPMENT AGAIN, HANK?
WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE?
THE PROGRAMMING IS TOTALLY ALIEN TO ME. THE FREQUENCY MODULATORS ARE ALL OFF AND THE FILES ARE ALL WRONG!
IT'LL TAKE WEEKS TO GET THINGS BACK TO THE WAY WE HAD THEM!
HANK, I KNOW THINGS HAVE BEEN CONFUSING SINCE WE DISCOVERED UTE HAD TRANSFORMED THE MANSION...
...BUT THINGS WILL WORK OUT. THEY HAVE TO.
CAP, CAN I SPEAK TO YOU FOR A MOMENT?
WHAT IS IT, TASHA?
THE LOSS OF DANE AND SERSI HAS EVERYONE ON EDGE.. IT HIT US HARD...
...I'M WORRIED ABOUT THE TEAM.

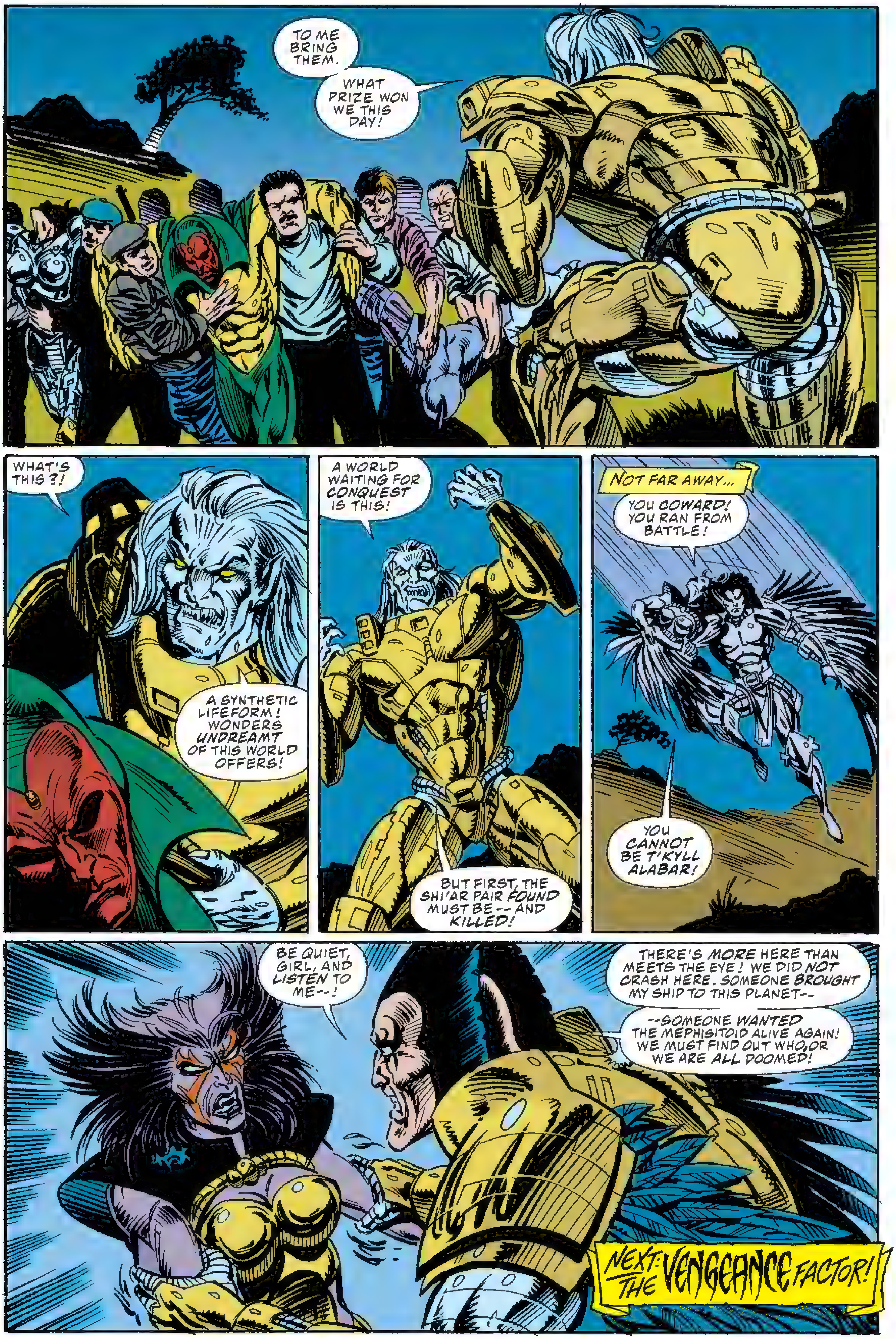

I THINK YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE, TASHA.
CRYSTAL--!
PIETRO, IS THERE ANY WORD ON THE VISION AND THE OTHERS YET?
NO. I AM AFRAID NOT.
BUT I-- I WANTED TO KNOW HOW *YOU*--
--I MEAN-- HOW WERE THE PLANS FOR THE MEMORIAL SERVICE?
CAP AND I TALKED LAST NIGHT.
WE THINK A *SIMPLE* SERVICE IN THE GARDEN WOULD BE APPROPRIATE.
PIETRO... YOU'VE BEEN *SO* KIND THESE PAST FEW DAYS...
I AM MERELY A MAN CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE HE CARES ABOUT VERY, *VERY* MUCH.
I--I KNOW...


JUST GIVE ME TIME, PIETRO.
PLEASE... A LITTLE MORE TIME.
TAKE *ALL* THE TIME YOU NEED, CRYSTAL...
...ALL THE TIME YOU NEED.
GOOD QUICKSILVER...
...YOU HAVE BUT *LATELY* REJOINED OUR FELLOWSHIP, BUT KNOW I HAVE *EVER* BEEN THY FRIEND...
...IF THOU EVER FEEL THE *NEED* TO TALK ...OR FOR ADVICE IN MATTERS OF THE *HEART*... I AM HERE.
THANK YOU, *HERCULES*...
...BUT TELL ME, OLYMPIAN, TO WIN BACK MY WIFE...
...HOW DO I FIGHT A *GHOST?*


SCOTLAND...
YOU SEEM UPSET BY T'KYLL'S REVELATIONS, DEATHCRY.
I HAVE FOUND THAT LEGENDS RARELY LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS.
REALITY IS ALWAYS MUCH MORE COMPLICATED.
I AM NOT UPSET, VISION. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
REALLY? THEN YOU HAVE MY APOL--
--eh?
SWORDSMAN, MAGDALENE, WE HAVE A VISITOR.
BY SHARRA'S CLAW-- THE MEPHISITOID!

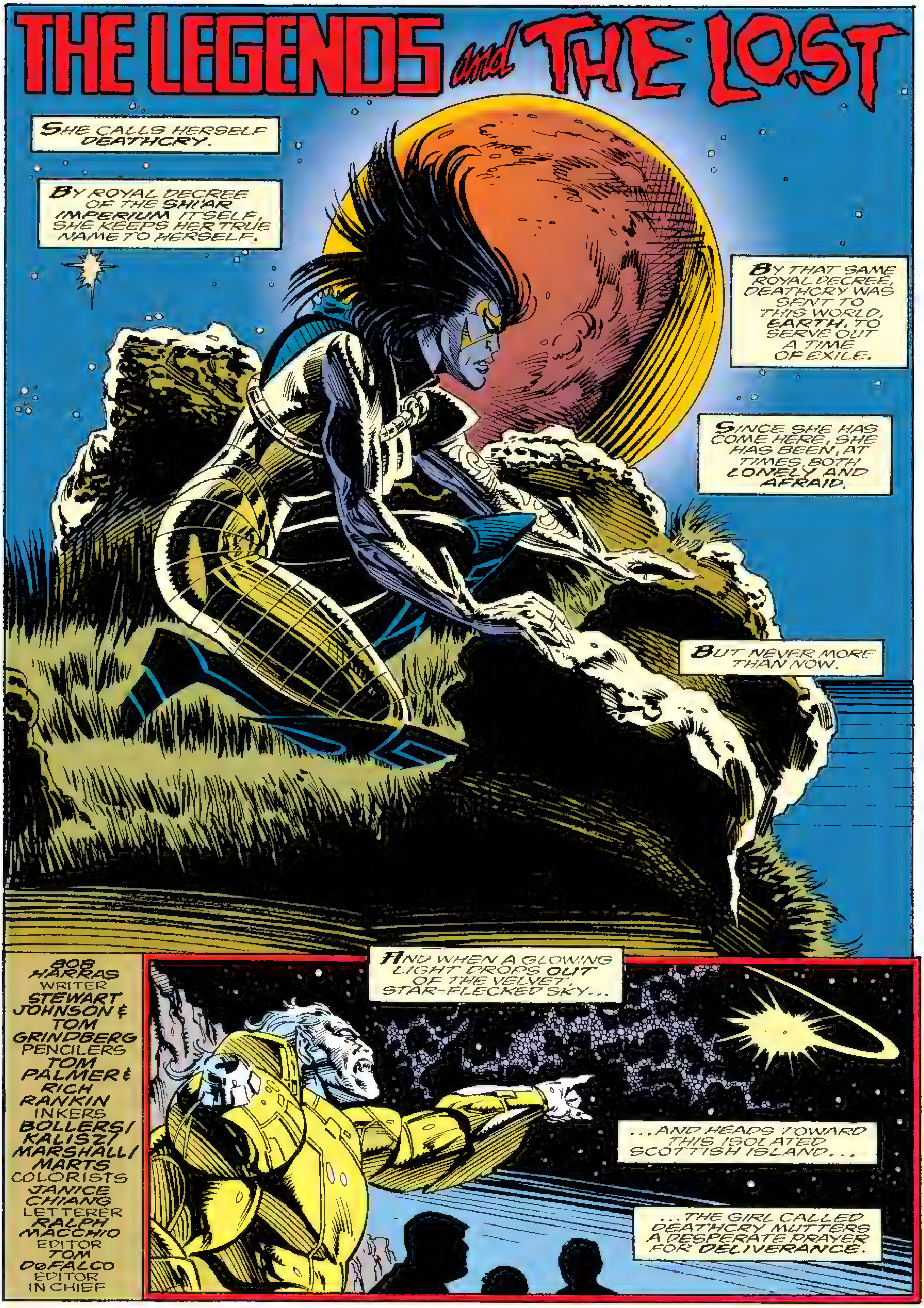

STAND BACK. IF WHAT T'KYLL TOLD US IS TRUE, ANY PROXIMITY TO THE ALIEN CAN LEAD TO ENTHRALLMENT.
VISION--*LOOK!* HE MUST HAVE BROUGHT THE *ENTIRE* VILLAGE WITH HIM!
YES... *ALL* THE SOLDIERS HAVE I ON THIS PALTRY PLANET.
MORE THAN ENOUGH ARE THEY!
BUT *ALWAYS* ROOM THERE IS FOR MORE!
MAGGIE--?!


--YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO!
IT WOULD APPEAR THE PHEROMONE-EFFECT IS NEARLY INSTANTANEOUS.
SILENCE, ANDROID!
FZZSHAM!
VISION!!
GRAB 'EM!
THE CHIEF WANTS 'EM!
WHERE ARE THE SHI'AR?!
WE ARE HERE, YOU--!
SILENCE, YOU FOOLISH GIRL!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SAVING YOUR LIFE!


TO ME BRING THEM.
WHAT PRIZE WON WE THIS DAY!
WHAT'S THIS?!
A SYNTHETIC LIFEFORM! WONDERS UNDREAMT OF THIS WORLD OFFERS!
A WORLD WAITING FOR CONQUEST IS THIS!
BUT FIRST, THE SHI'AR PAIR FOUND MUST BE -- AND KILLED!
NOT FAR AWAY...
YOU COWARD! YOU RAN FROM BATTLE!
YOU CANNOT BE T'KYLL ALABAR!
BE QUIET, GIRL, AND LISTEN TO ME--!
THERE'S MORE HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE! WE DID NOT CRASH HERE. SOMEONE BROUGHT MY SHIP TO THIS PLANET--
--SOMEONE WANTED THE MEPHISITOID ALIVE AGAIN! WE MUST FIND OUT WHO, OR WE ARE ALL DOOMED!
NEXT: THE VENGEANCE FACTOR!

MARVEL COMICS
379
OCT
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES!
AVENGERS
"WHEN A HERO FALLS..."

THE LEGENDS and THE LOST


SHE CALLS HERSELF DEATHCRY.
BY ROYAL DECREE OF THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM ITSELF, SHE KEEPS HER TRUE NAME TO HERSELF.
BY THAT SAME ROYAL DECREE, DEATHCRY WAS SENT TO THIS WORLD, EARTH, TO SERVE OUT A TIME OF EXILE.
SINCE SHE HAS COME HERE, SHE HAS BEEN, AT TIMES, BOTH LONELY AND AFRAID.
BUT NEVER MORE THAN NOW.
AND WHEN A GLOWING LIGHT DROPS OUT OF THE VELVET, STAR-FLECKED SKY...
...AND HEADS TOWARD THIS ISOLATED SCOTTISH ISLAND...
...THE GIRL CALLED DEATHCRY MUTTERS A DESPERATE PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE.

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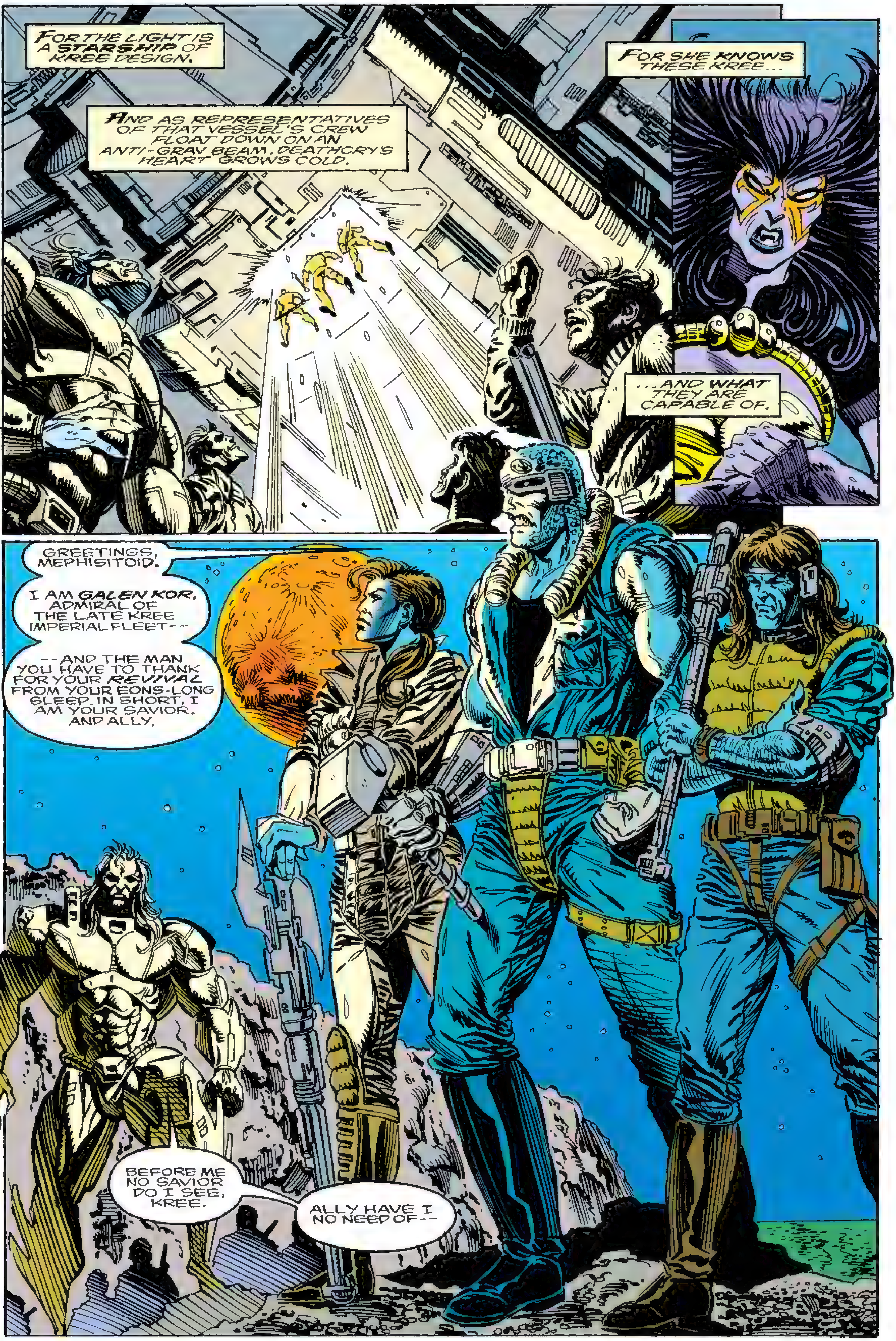
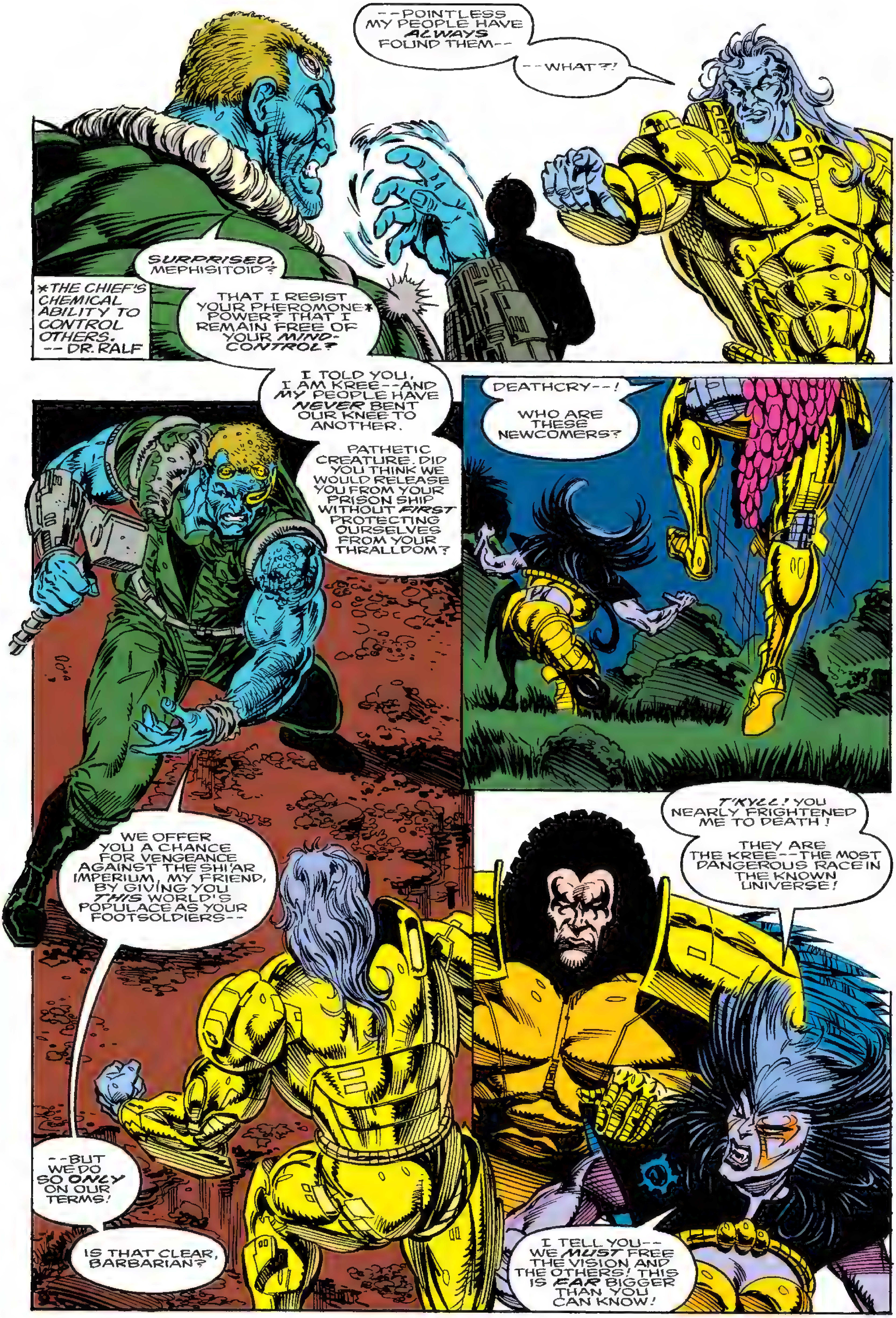
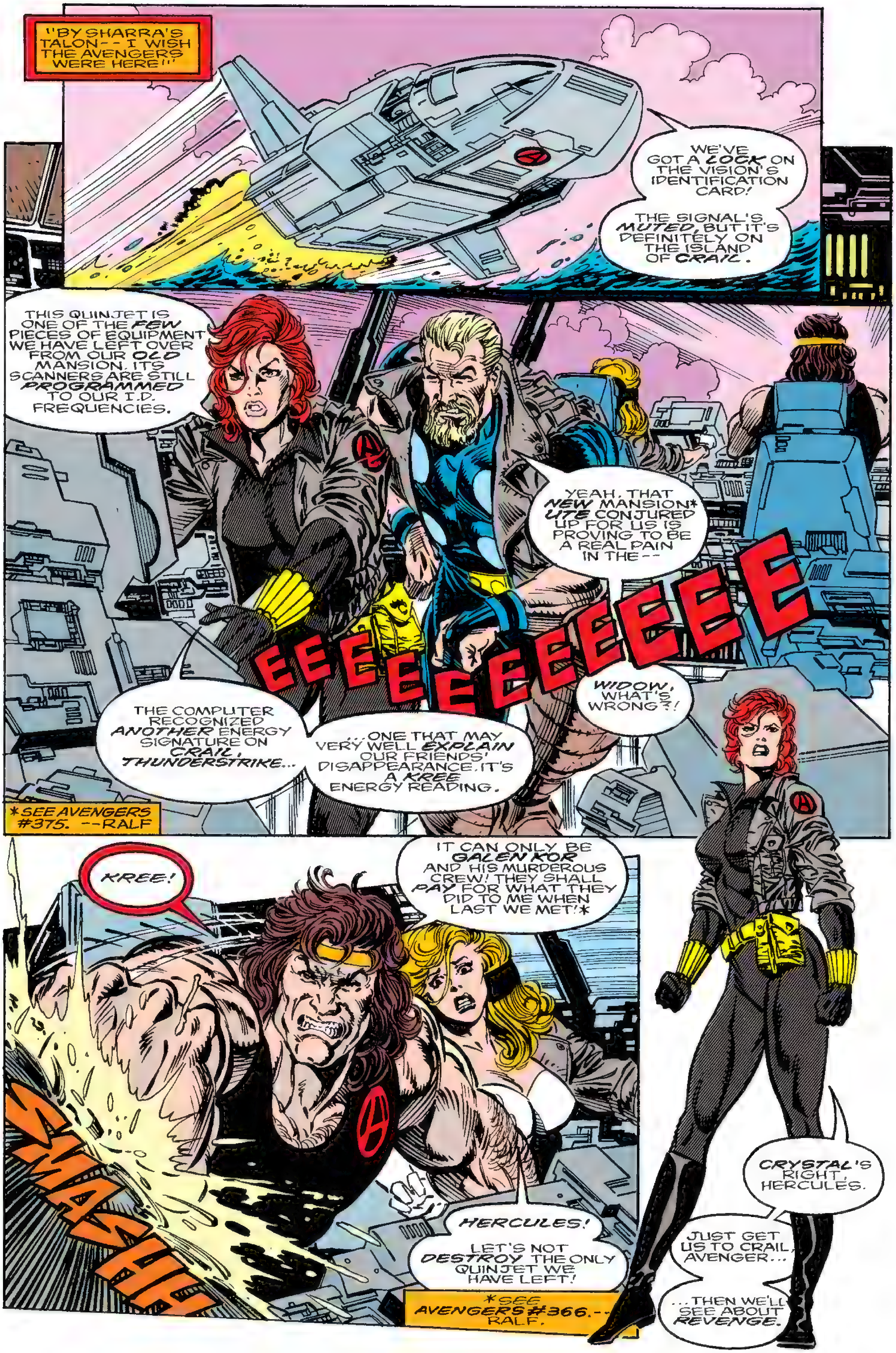
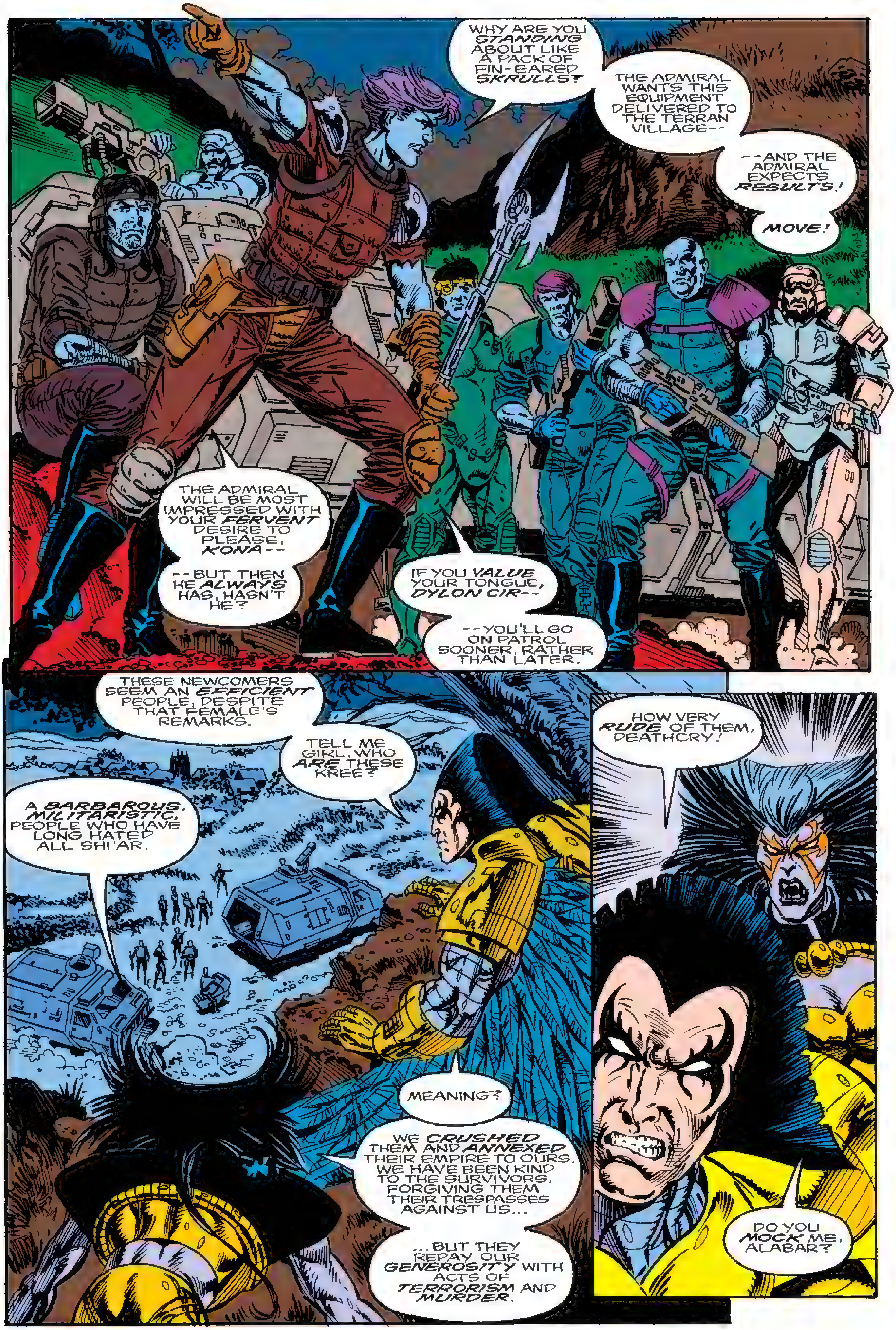
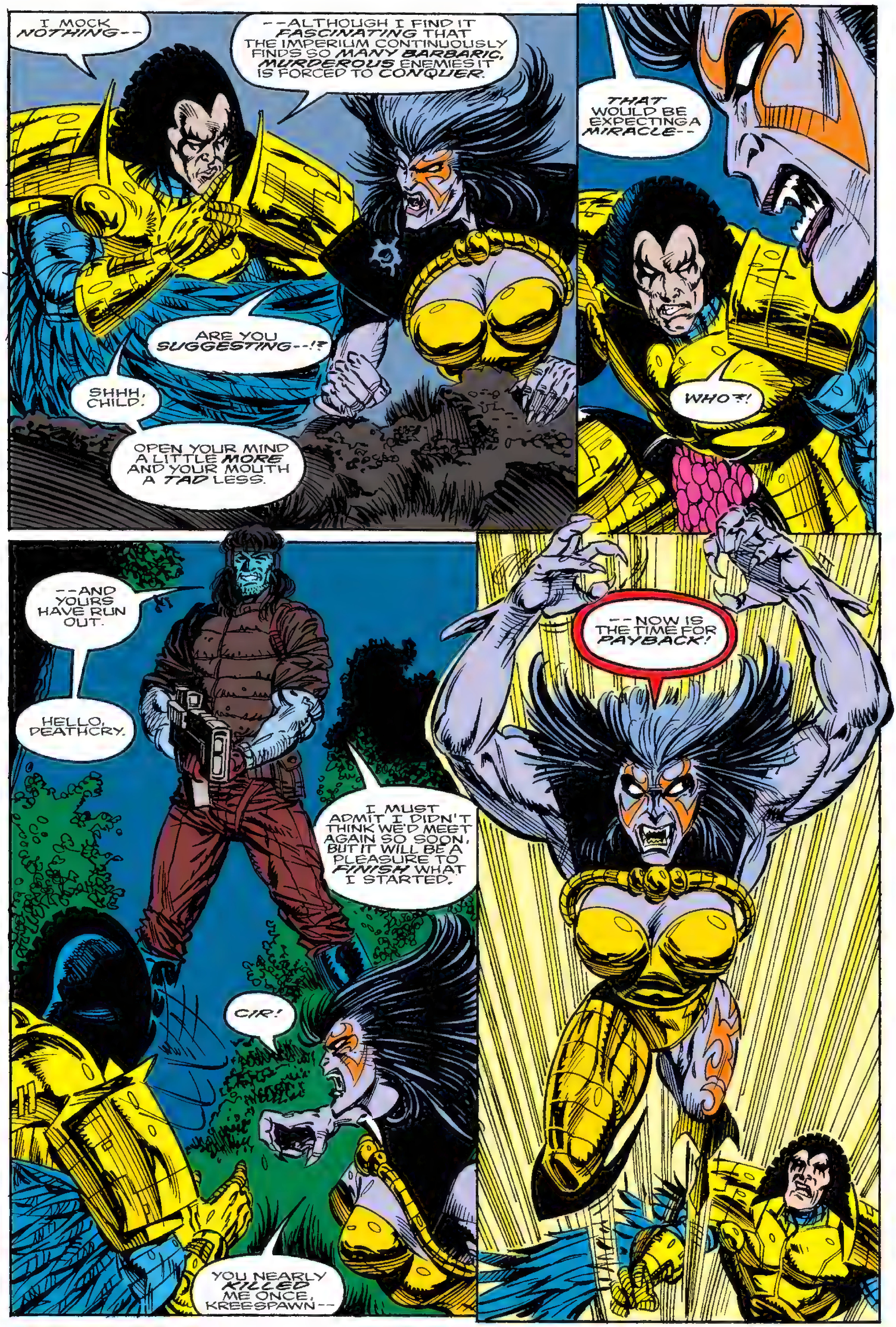
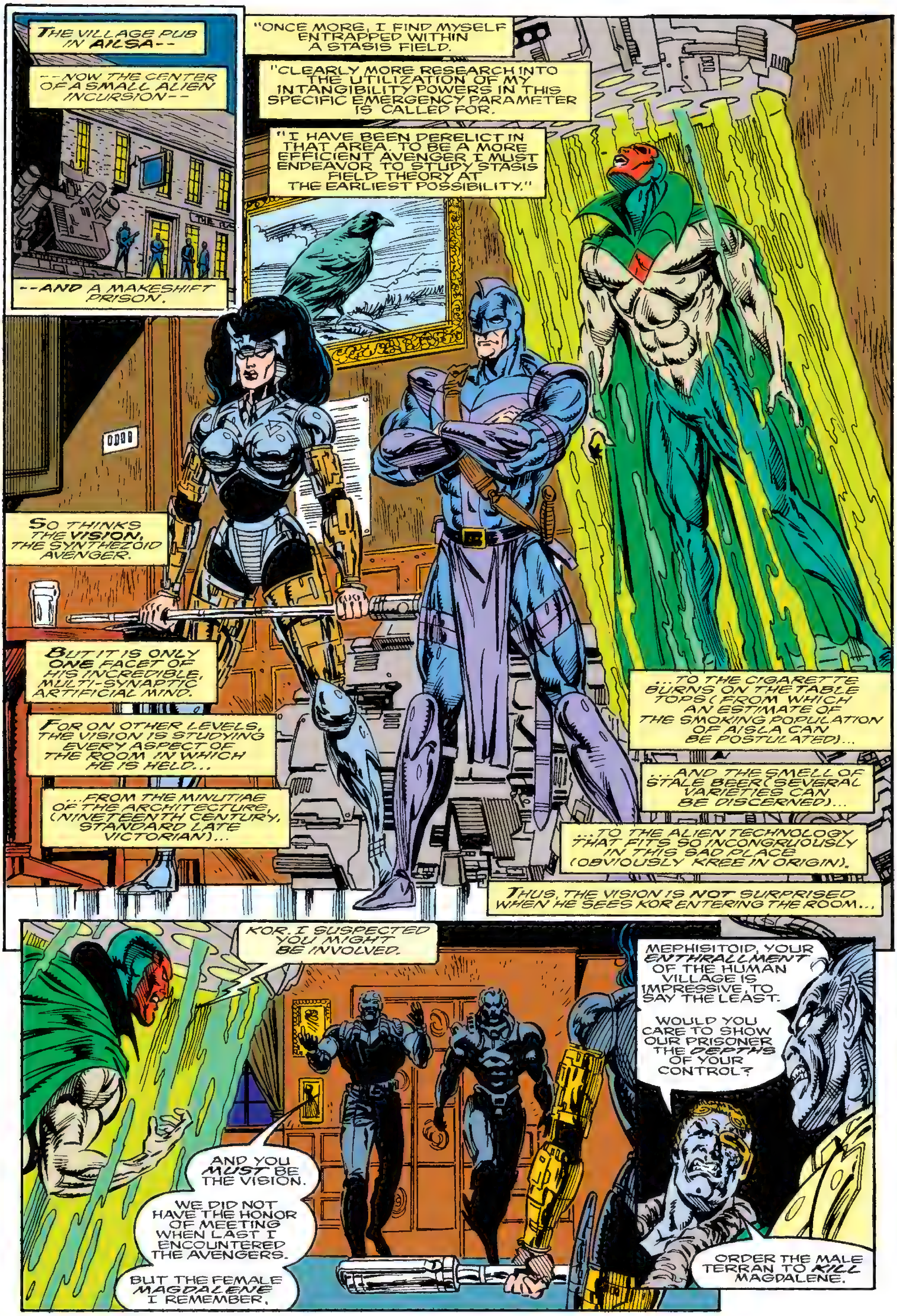

FOR THE LIGHT IS A STARSHIP OF KREE DESIGN.
AND AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THAT VESSEL'S CREW FLOAT DOWN ON AN ANTI-GRAV BEAM, DEATHCRY'S HEART GROWS COLD.
FOR SHE KNOWS THESE KREE...
...AND WHAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF.
GREETINGS, MEPHISITOID.
I AM GALEN KOR, ADMIRAL OF THE LATE KREE IMPERIAL FLEET--
--AND THE MAN YOU HAVE TO THANK FOR YOUR REVIVAL FROM YOUR EONS-LONG SLEEP. IN SHORT, I AM YOUR SAVIOR. AND ALLY.
BEFORE ME NO SAVIOR DO I SEE, KREE.
ALLY HAVE I NO NEED OF--

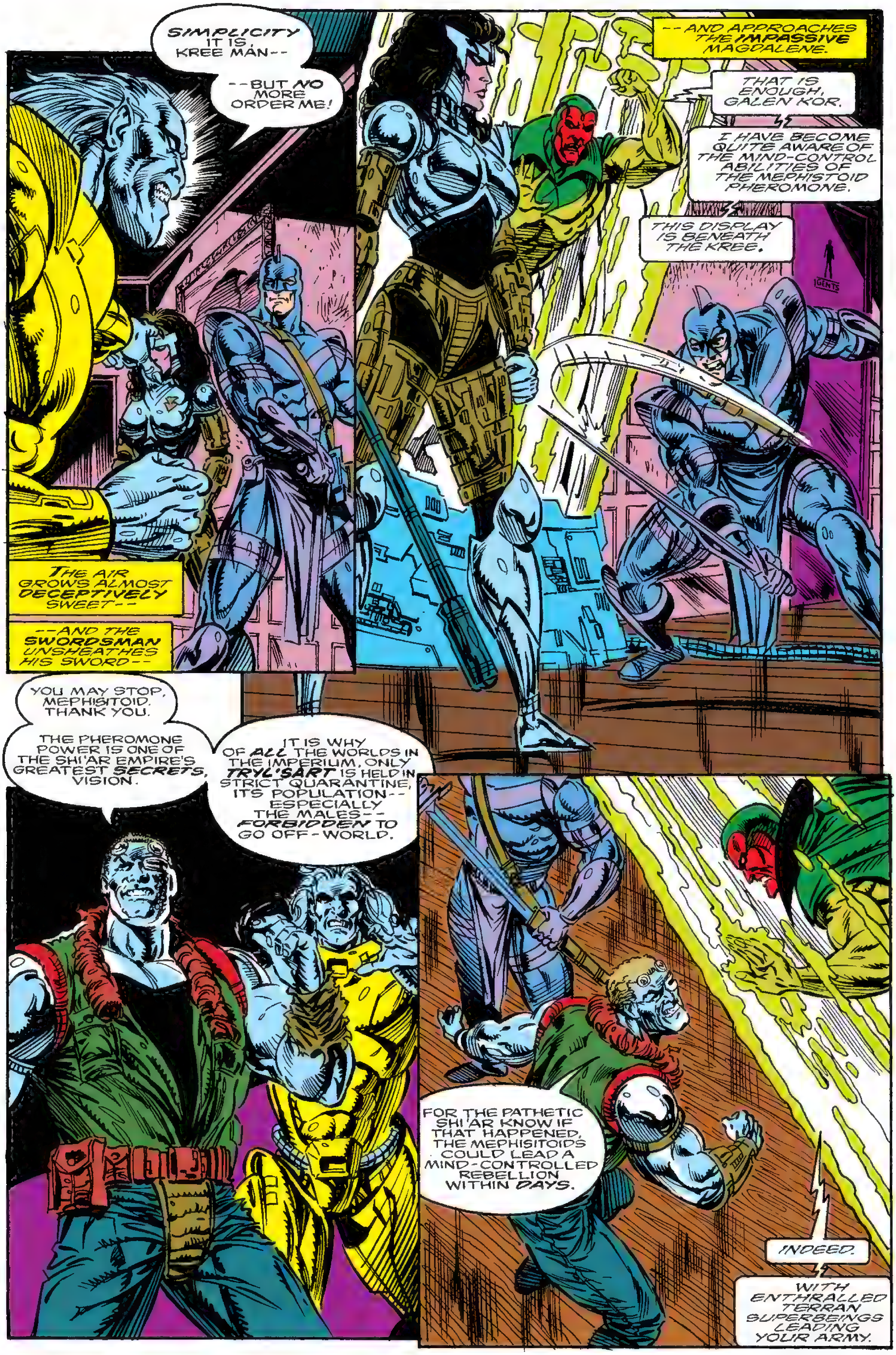

--POINTLESS MY PEOPLE HAVE *ALWAYS* FOUND THEM--
--WHAT?!
SURPRISED, MEPHISITOID?
THAT I RESIST YOUR PHEROMONE* POWER? THAT I REMAIN FREE OF YOUR *MIND-CONTROL?*
*THE CHIEF'S CHEMICAL ABILITY TO CONTROL OTHERS. --DR. RALF
I TOLD YOU, I AM KREE--AND *MY* PEOPLE HAVE *NEVER* BENT OUR KNEE TO ANOTHER.
PATHETIC CREATURE. DID YOU THINK WE WOULD RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR PRISON SHIP WITHOUT *FIRST* PROTECTING OURSELVES FROM YOUR THRALLDOM?
DEATHCRY--!
WHO ARE THESE NEWCOMERS?
WE OFFER YOU A CHANCE FOR VENGEANCE AGAINST THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM, MY FRIEND, BY GIVING YOU *THIS* WORLD'S POPULACE AS YOUR FOOTSOLDIERS--
--BUT WE DO SO *ONLY* ON OUR TERMS!
IS THAT CLEAR, BARBARIAN?
T'KYLL! YOU NEARLY FRIGHTENED ME TO DEATH!
THEY ARE THE KREE--THE MOST DANGEROUS RACE IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE!
I TELL YOU--WE *MUST* FREE THE VISION AND THE OTHERS! THIS IS *FAR* BIGGER THAN YOU CAN KNOW!

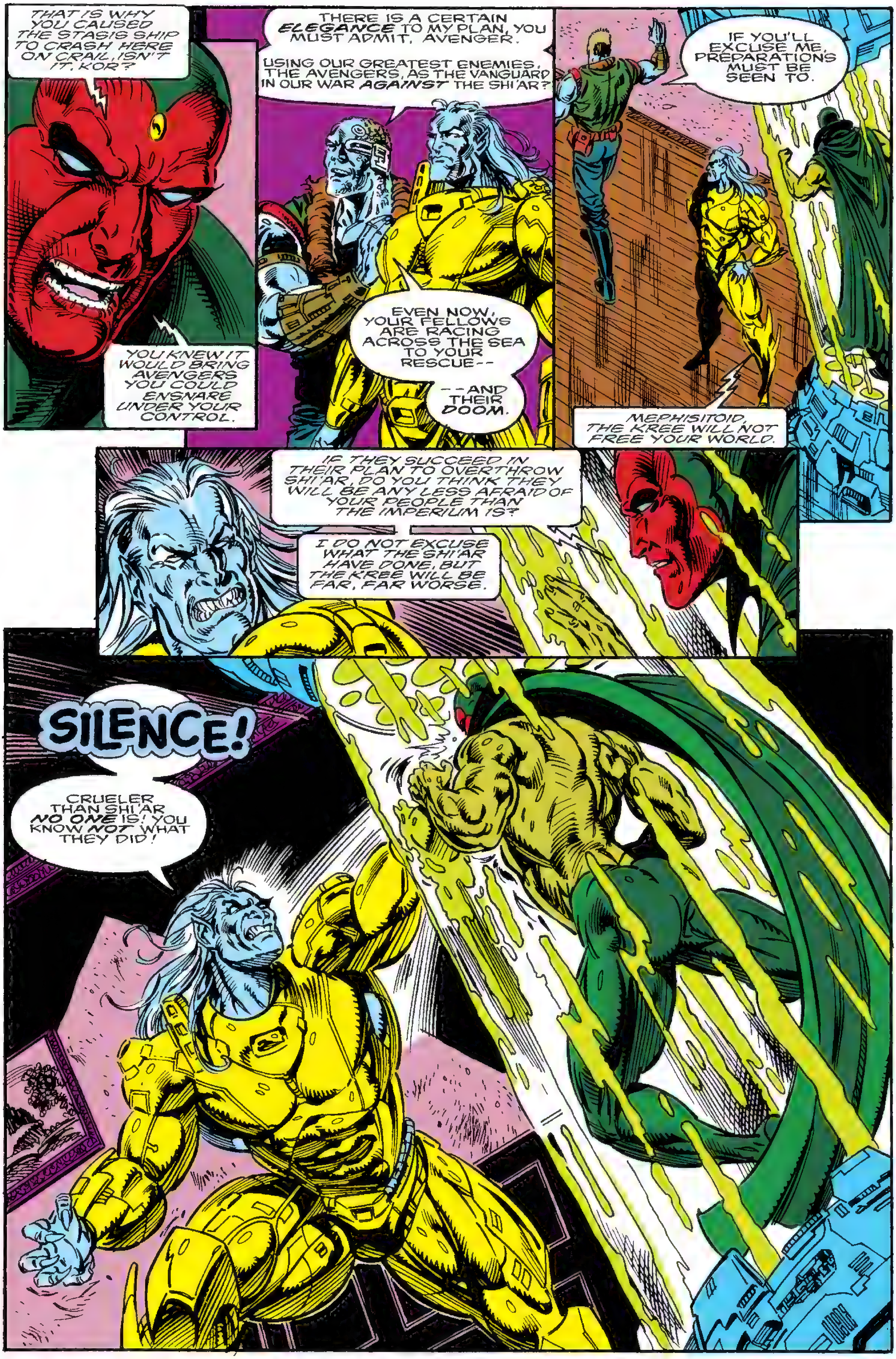

"BY SHARRA'S TALON-- I WISH THE AVENGERS WERE HERE!"
WE'VE GOT A **LOCK** ON THE VISION'S IDENTIFICATION CARD!
THE SIGNAL'S **MUTED**, BUT IT'S DEFINITELY ON THE ISLAND OF **CRAIL**.
THIS QUINJET IS ONE OF THE **FEW** PIECES OF EQUIPMENT WE HAVE LEFT OVER FROM OUR **OLD** MANSION. ITS SCANNERS ARE STILL **PROGRAMMED** TO OUR I.D. FREQUENCIES.
YEAH, THAT **NEW** MANSION* **UTE** CONJURED UP FOR US IS PROVING TO BE A REAL PAIN IN THE--
EEEEEEEEEEEE
WIDOW, WHAT'S WRONG?!
THE COMPUTER RECOGNIZED **ANOTHER** ENERGY SIGNATURE ON **CRAIL**, **THUNDERSTRIKE**...
...ONE THAT MAY VERY WELL **EXPLAIN** OUR FRIENDS' DISAPPEARANCE. IT'S A **KREE** ENERGY READING.
*SEE AVENGERS #375. --RALF
KREE!
IT CAN ONLY BE **GALEN KOR** AND HIS MURDEROUS CREW! THEY SHALL **PAY** FOR WHAT THEY DID TO ME WHEN LAST WE MET!*
SMASH!
HERCULES!
LET'S NOT **DESTROY** THE ONLY QUINJET WE HAVE LEFT!
*SEE AVENGERS #366.--RALF.
CRYSTAL'S RIGHT, HERCULES.
JUST GET US TO CRAIL, AVENGER...
...THEN WE'LL SEE ABOUT **REVENGE**.

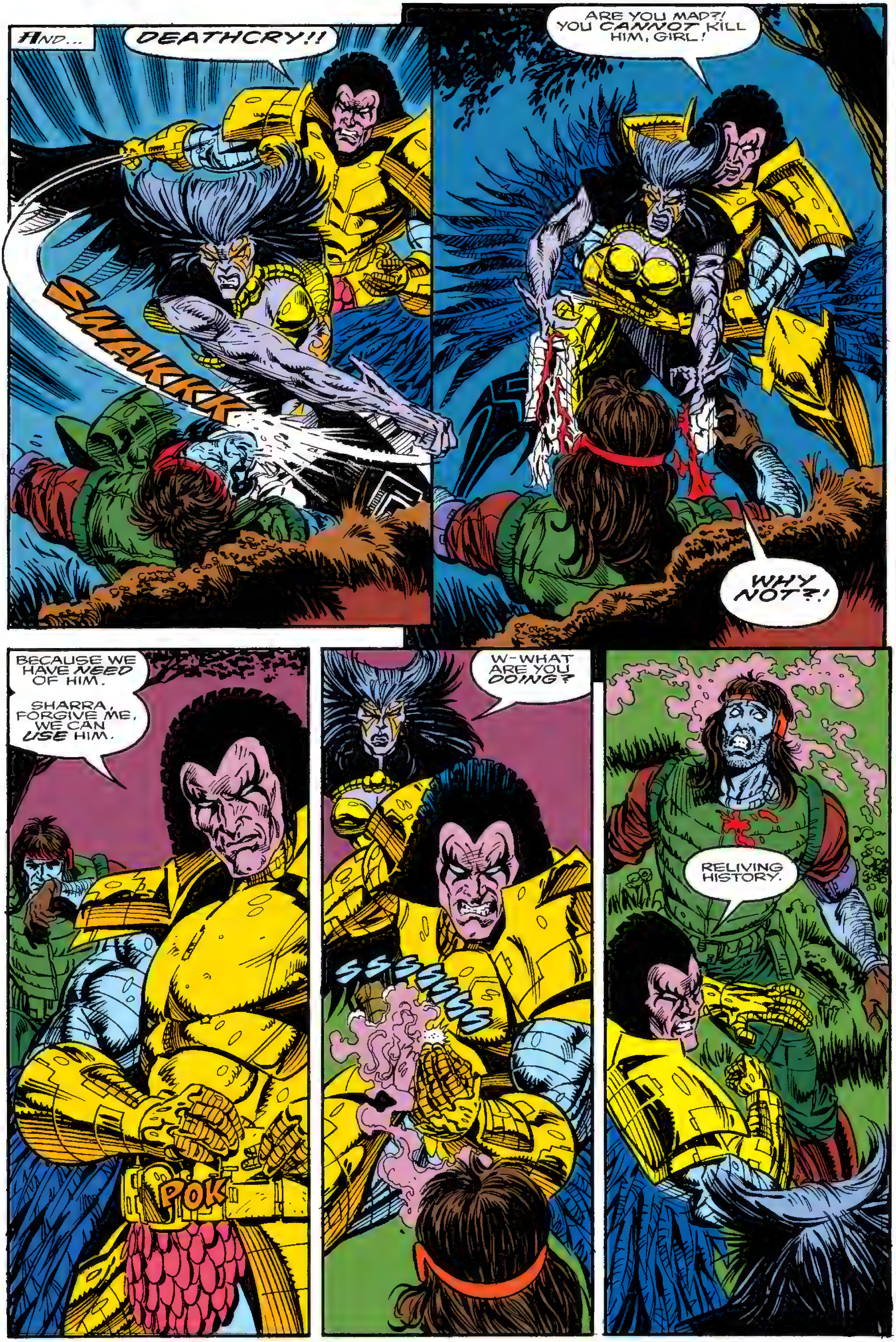

WHY ARE YOU *STANDING* ABOUT LIKE A PACK OF FIN-EARED *SKRULLS*?
THE ADMIRAL WANTS THIS EQUIPMENT DELIVERED TO THE TERRAN VILLAGE--
--AND THE ADMIRAL EXPECTS *RESULTS*!
MOVE!
THE ADMIRAL WILL BE MOST IMPRESSED WITH YOUR *FERVENT* DESIRE TO PLEASE, *KONA*--
--BUT THEN HE *ALWAYS* HAS, HASN'T HE?
IF YOU *VALUE* YOUR TONGUE, *DYLON CIR*--
--YOU'LL GO ON PATROL SOONER, RATHER THAN LATER.
THESE NEWCOMERS SEEM AN *EFFICIENT* PEOPLE, DESPITE THAT FEMALE'S REMARKS.
TELL ME GIRL, WHO *ARE* THESE KREE?
A *BARBAROUS, MILITARISTIC* PEOPLE WHO HAVE LONG HATED ALL SHI'AR.
MEANING?
WE *CRUSHED* THEM AND *ANNEXED* THEIR EMPIRE TO OURS. WE HAVE BEEN KIND TO THE SURVIVORS, FORGIVING THEM THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST US...
...BUT THEY REPAY OUR *GENEROSITY* WITH ACTS OF *TERRORISM* AND *MURDER*.
HOW VERY *RUDE* OF THEM, DEATHCRY!
DO YOU *MOCK* ME, ALABAR?

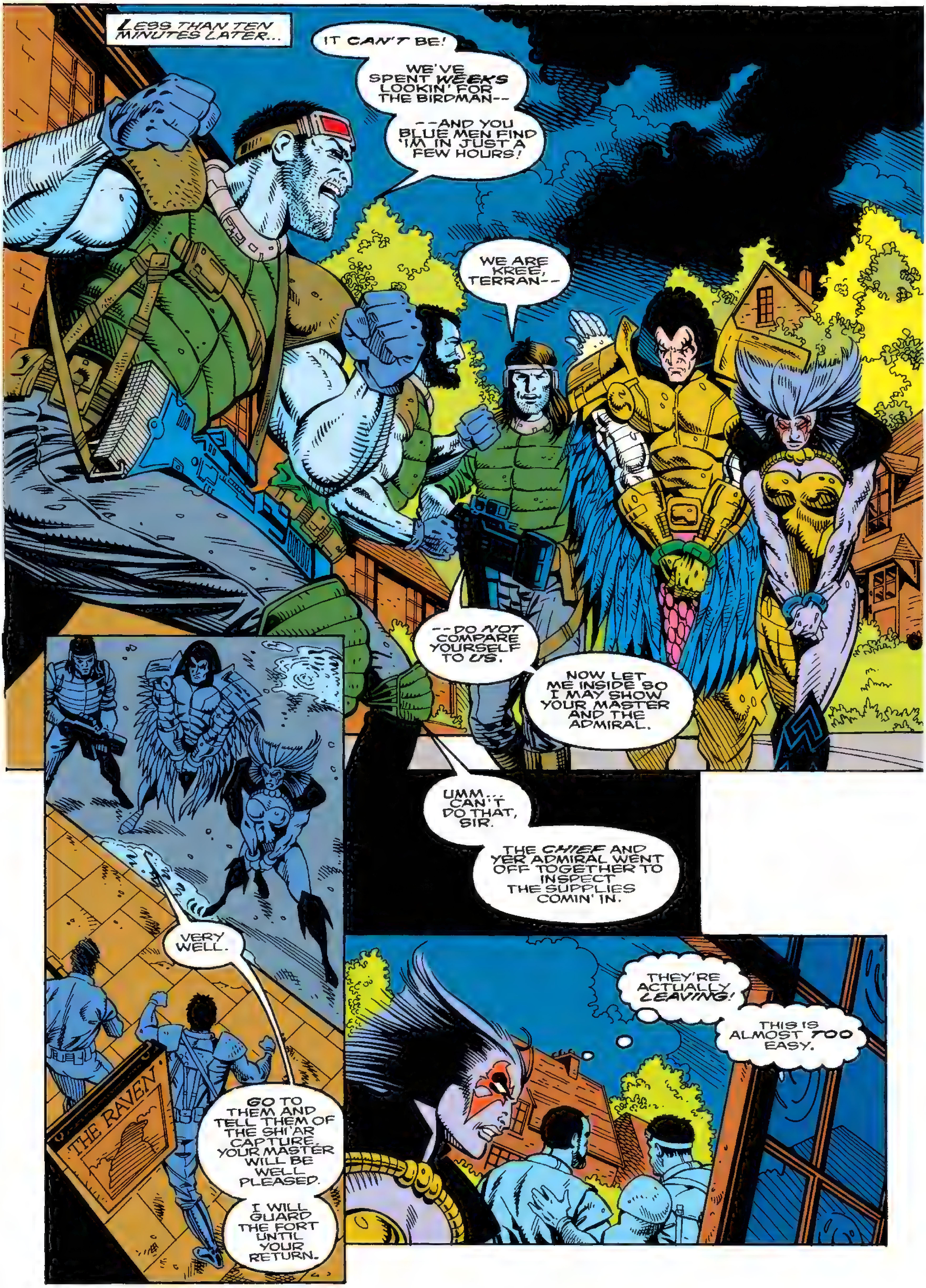

I MOCK *NOTHING*--
--ALTHOUGH I FIND IT *FASCINATING* THAT THE IMPERIUM CONTINUOUSLY FINDS SO *MANY BARBARIC, MURDEROUS* ENEMIES IT IS FORCED TO *CONQUER*.
ARE YOU *SUGGESTING*--!?
SHHH, CHILD.
OPEN YOUR MIND A LITTLE *MORE* AND YOUR MOUTH A *TAD* LESS.
THAT WOULD BE EXPECTING A *MIRACLE*--
WHO?!
--AND YOURS HAVE RUN OUT.
HELLO, DEATHCRY.
I MUST ADMIT I DIDN'T THINK WE'D MEET AGAIN SO SOON, BUT IT WILL BE A PLEASURE TO *FINISH* WHAT I STARTED.
CIR!
YOU NEARLY *KILLED* ME ONCE, KREESPAWN--
--NOW IS THE TIME FOR *PAYBACK!*

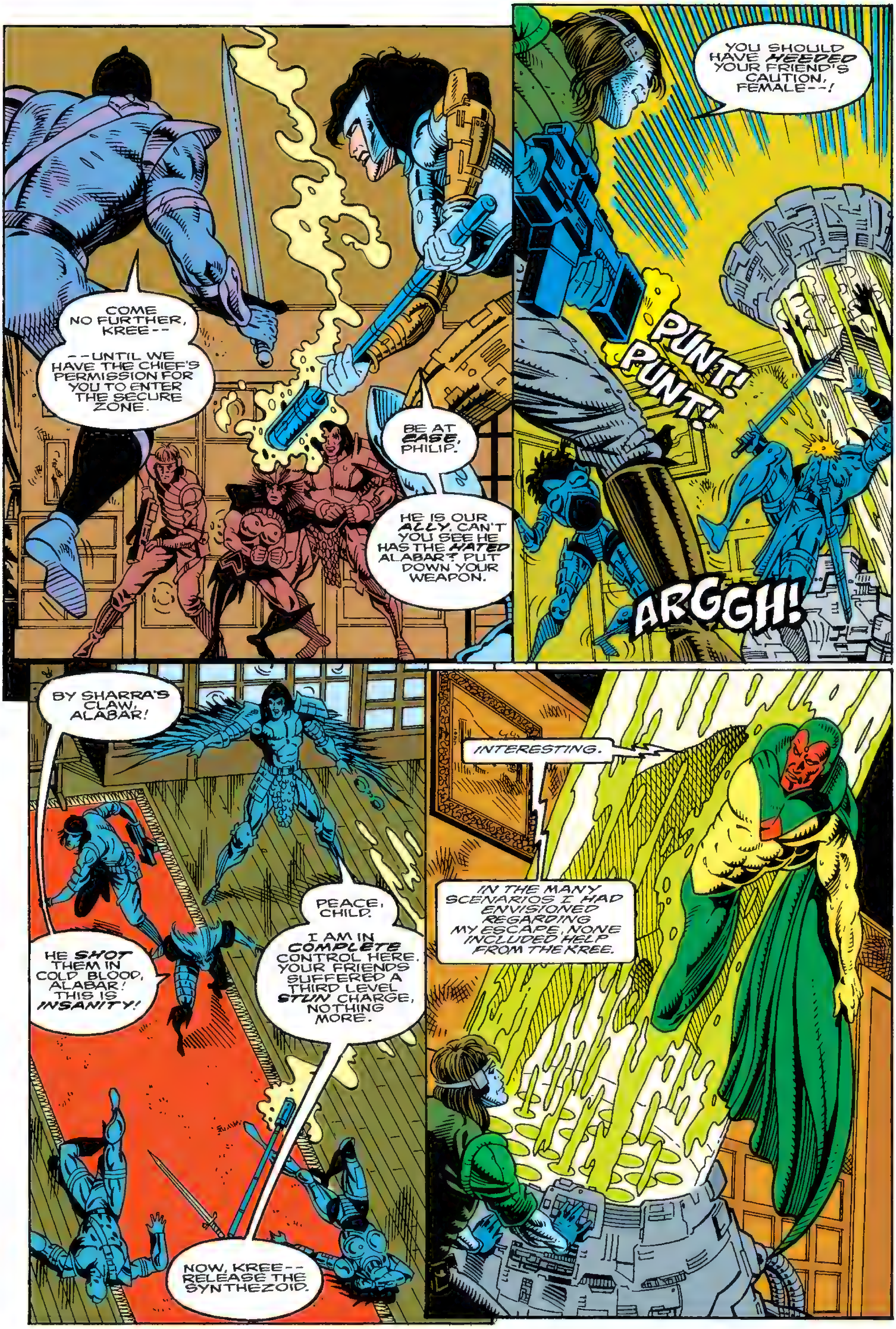

THE VILLAGE PUB IN AILSA--
--NOW THE CENTER OF A SMALL ALIEN INCURSION--
--AND A MAKESHIFT PRISON.
"ONCE MORE, I FIND MYSELF ENTRAPPED WITHIN A STASIS FIELD.
"CLEARLY MORE RESEARCH INTO THE UTILIZATION OF MY INTANGIBILITY POWERS IN THIS SPECIFIC EMERGENCY PARAMETER IS CALLED FOR.
"I HAVE BEEN DERELICT IN THAT AREA. TO BE A MORE EFFICIENT AVENGER I MUST ENDEAVOR TO STUDY STASIS FIELD THEORY AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBILITY."
SO THINKS THE VISION, THE SYNTHEZOID AVENGER.
BUT IT IS ONLY ONE FACET OF HIS INCREDIBLE, MULTI-SYNAPTIC ARTIFICIAL MIND.
FOR ON OTHER LEVELS, THE VISION IS STUDYING EVERY ASPECT OF THE ROOM IN WHICH HE IS HELD...
...FROM THE MINUTIAE OF THE ARCHITECTURE, (NINETEENTH CENTURY, STANDARD LATE VICTORIAN)...
...TO THE CIGARETTE BURNS ON THE TABLE TOPS (FROM WHICH AN ESTIMATE OF THE SMOKING POPULATION OF AISLA CAN BE POSTULATED)...
...AND THE SMELL OF STALE BEER (SEVERAL VARIETIES CAN BE DISCERNED)...
...TO THE ALIEN TECHNOLOGY THAT FITS SO INCONGRUOUSLY IN THIS SAD PLACE (OBVIOUSLY KREE IN ORIGIN).
THUS, THE VISION IS NOT SURPRISED WHEN HE SEES KOR ENTERING THE ROOM...
KOR. I SUSPECTED YOU MIGHT BE INVOLVED.
AND YOU MUST BE THE VISION.
WE DID NOT HAVE THE HONOR OF MEETING WHEN LAST I ENCOUNTERED THE AVENGERS.
BUT THE FEMALE MAGDALENE I REMEMBER.
MEPHISITOID, YOUR ENTHRALLMENT OF THE HUMAN VILLAGE IS IMPRESSIVE, TO SAY THE LEAST.
WOULD YOU CARE TO SHOW OUR PRISONER THE DEPTHS OF YOUR CONTROL?
ORDER THE MALE TERRAN TO KILL MAGDALENE.

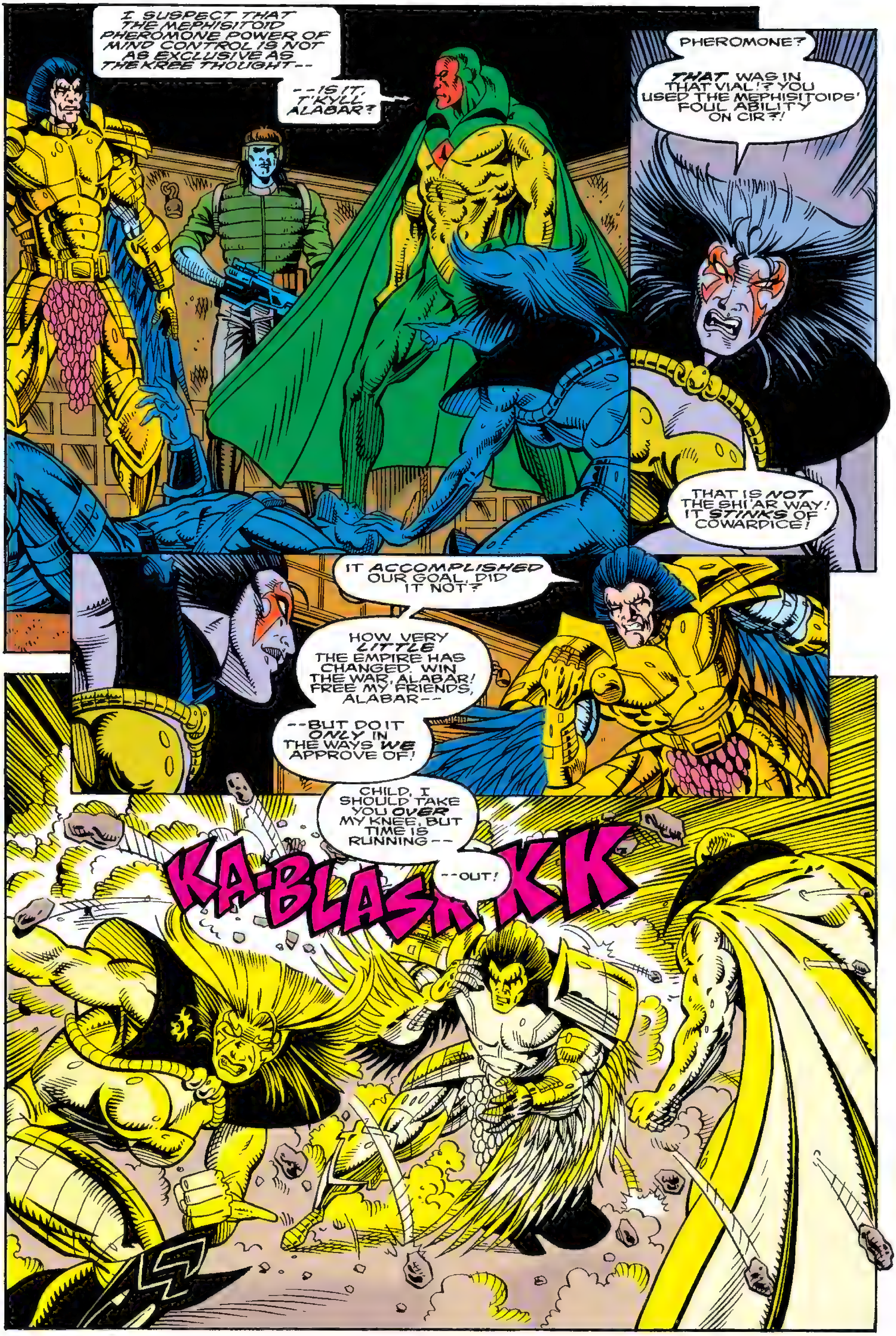

SIMPLICITY IT IS, KREE MAN--
--BUT NO MORE ORDER ME!
THE AIR GROWS ALMOST DECEPTIVELY SWEET--
--AND THE SWORDSMAN UNSHEATHES HIS SWORD--
--AND APPROACHES THE IMPASSIVE MAGDALENE.
THAT IS ENOUGH, GALEN KOR.
I HAVE BECOME QUITE AWARE OF THE MIND-CONTROL ABILITIES OF THE MEPHISTOID PHEROMONE.
THIS DISPLAY IS BENEATH THE KREE.
YOU MAY STOP, MEPHISITOID. THANK YOU.
THE PHEROMONE POWER IS ONE OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE'S GREATEST SECRETS, VISION.
IT IS WHY OF ALL THE WORLDS IN THE IMPERIUM, ONLY TRYL'SART IS HELD IN STRICT QUARANTINE, ITS POPULATION--ESPECIALLY THE MALES--FORBIDDEN TO GO OFF-WORLD.
FOR THE PATHETIC SHI'AR KNOW IF THAT HAPPENED, THE MEPHISITOIDS COULD LEAD A MIND-CONTROLLED REBELLION WITHIN DAYS.
INDEED.
WITH ENTHRALLED TERRAN SUPERBEINGS LEADING YOUR ARMY.

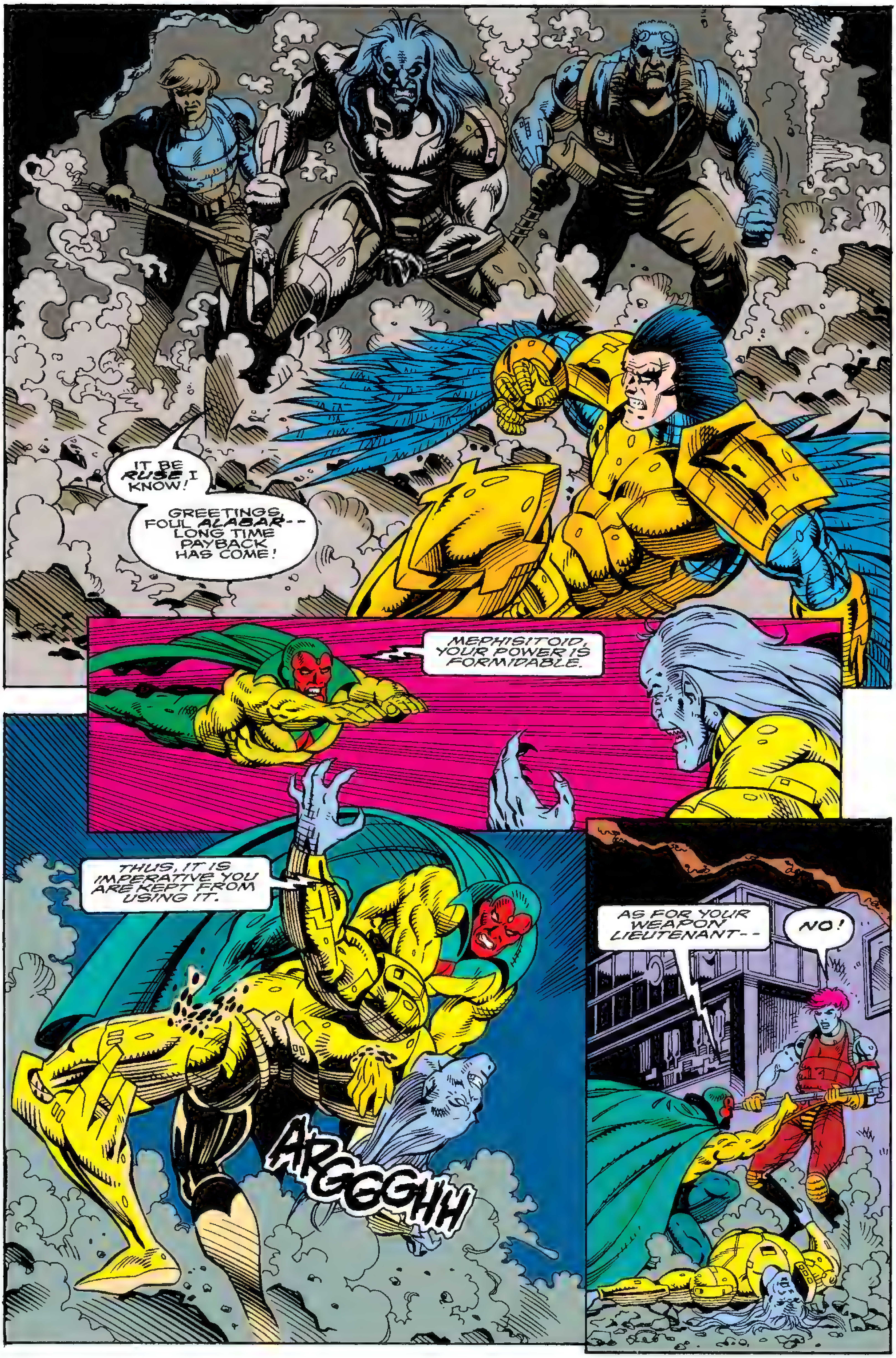

THAT IS WHY YOU CAUSED THE STASIS SHIP TO CRASH HERE ON CRAIL, ISN'T IT, KOR?
YOU KNEW IT WOULD BRING AVENGERS YOU COULD ENSNARE UNDER YOUR CONTROL.
THERE IS A CERTAIN *ELEGANCE* TO MY PLAN, YOU MUST ADMIT, AVENGER.
USING OUR GREATEST ENEMIES, THE AVENGERS, AS THE VANGUARD IN OUR WAR *AGAINST* THE SHI'AR?
EVEN NOW, YOUR FELLOWS ARE RACING ACROSS THE SEA TO YOUR RESCUE--
--AND THEIR *DOOM*.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, PREPARATIONS MUST BE SEEN TO.
MEPHISITOID, THE KREE WILL NOT FREE YOUR WORLD.
IF THEY SUCCEED IN THEIR PLAN TO OVERTHROW SHI'AR, DO YOU THINK THEY WILL BE ANY LESS AFRAID OF YOUR PEOPLE THAN THE IMPERIUM IS?
I DO NOT EXCUSE WHAT THE SHI'AR HAVE DONE, BUT THE KREE WILL BE FAR, FAR WORSE.
SILENCE!
CRUELER THAN SHI'AR *NO ONE* IS! YOU KNOW *NOT* WHAT THEY DID!

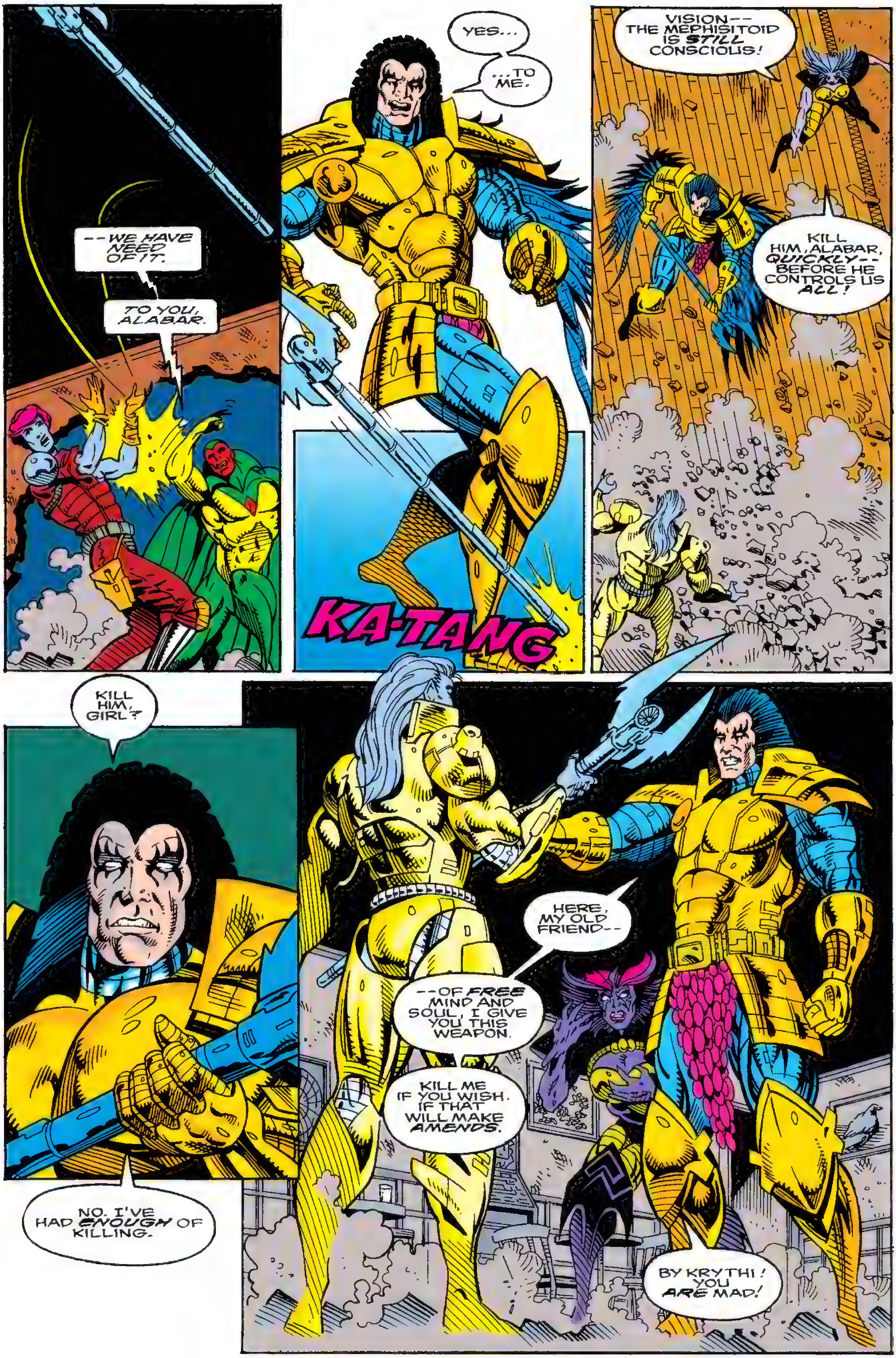

AND...
DEATHCRY!!
SWAKKK
ARE YOU MAD?! YOU *CANNOT* KILL HIM, GIRL!
WHY NOT?!
BECAUSE WE HAVE *NEED* OF HIM.
SHARRA, FORGIVE ME, WE CAN *USE* HIM.
POK
W-WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*
SSSSWWWW
RELIVING HISTORY.

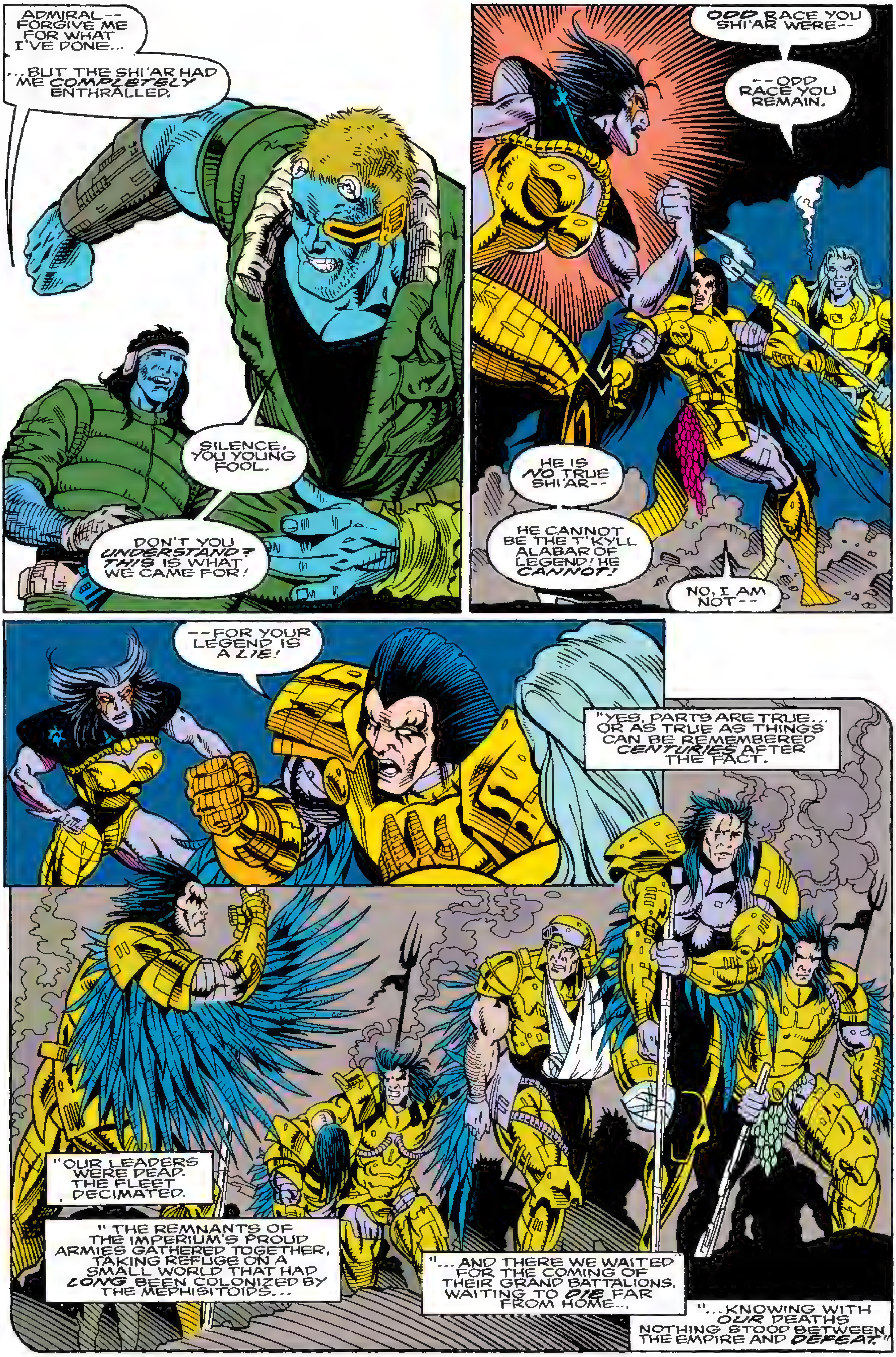

LESS THAN TEN MINUTES LATER...
IT CAN'T BE!
WE'VE SPENT WEEKS LOOKIN' FOR THE BIRDMAN--
--AND YOU BLUE MEN FIND 'IM IN JUST A FEW HOURS!
WE ARE KREE, TERRAN--
--DO NOT COMPARE YOURSELF TO US.
NOW LET ME INSIDE SO I MAY SHOW YOUR MASTER AND THE ADMIRAL.
UMM... CAN'T DO THAT, SIR.
THE CHIEF AND YER ADMIRAL WENT OFF TOGETHER TO INSPECT THE SUPPLIES COMIN' IN.
VERY WELL.
GO TO THEM AND TELL THEM OF THE SHI'AR CAPTURE. YOUR MASTER WILL BE WELL PLEASED.
I WILL GUARD THE FORT UNTIL YOUR RETURN.
THE RAVEN
THEY'RE ACTUALLY LEAVING!
THIS IS ALMOST TOO EASY.

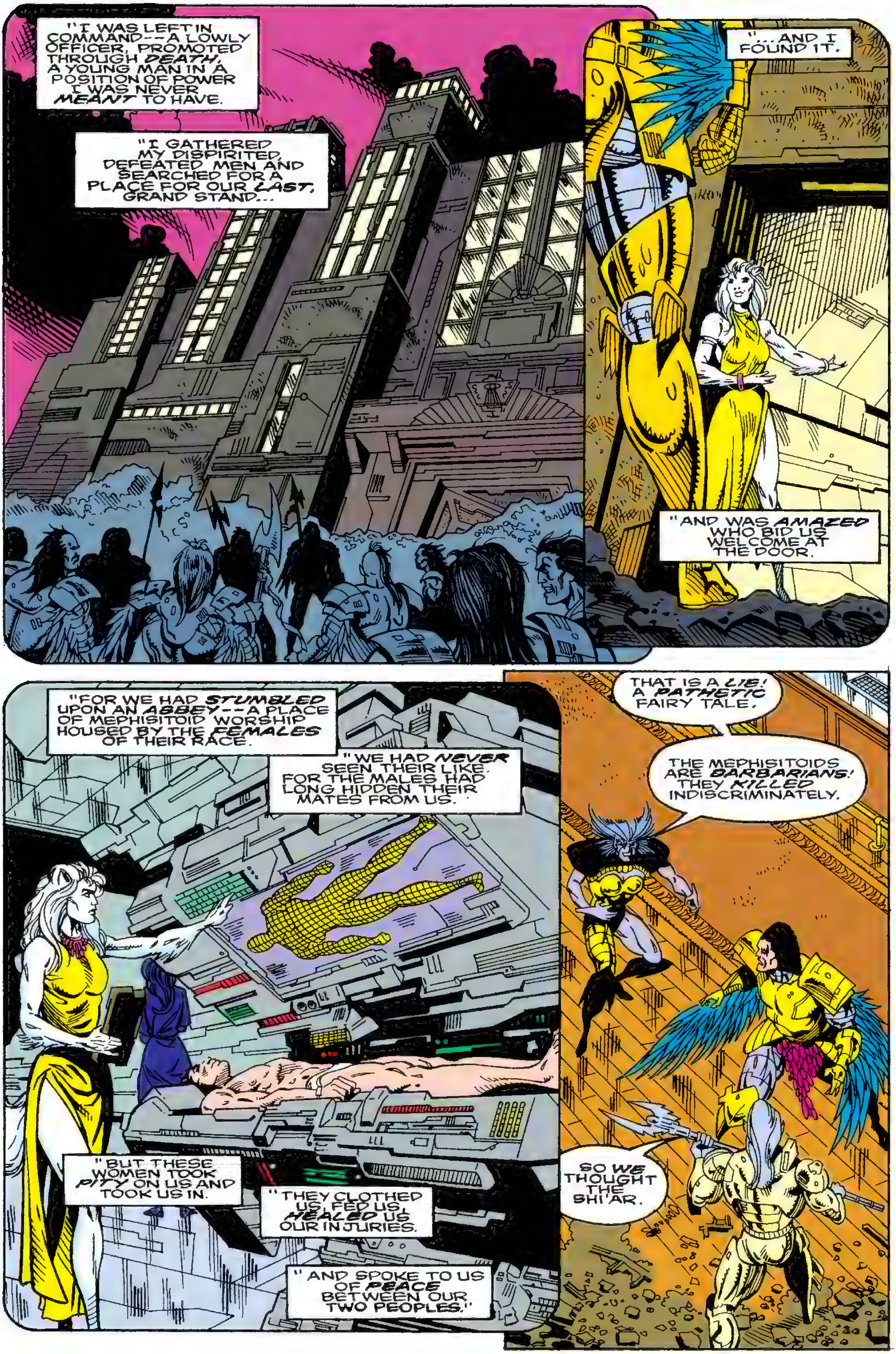

COME NO FURTHER, KREE--
--UNTIL WE HAVE THE CHIEF'S PERMISSION FOR YOU TO ENTER THE SECURE ZONE.
BE AT EASE, PHILIP.
HE IS OUR ALLY. CAN'T YOU SEE HE HAS THE HATED ALABAR? PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPON.
YOU SHOULD HAVE HEEDED YOUR FRIEND'S CAUTION, FEMALE--!
PUNT! PUNT!
ARGGH!
BY SHARRA'S CLAW, ALABAR!
HE SHOT THEM IN COLD BLOOD, ALABAR! THIS IS INSANITY!
PEACE, CHILD.
I AM IN COMPLETE CONTROL HERE. YOUR FRIENDS SUFFERED A THIRD LEVEL STUN CHARGE, NOTHING MORE.
NOW, KREE-- RELEASE THE SYNTHEZOID.
INTERESTING.
IN THE MANY SCENARIOS I HAD ENVISIONED REGARDING MY ESCAPE, NONE INCLUDED HELP FROM THE KREE.

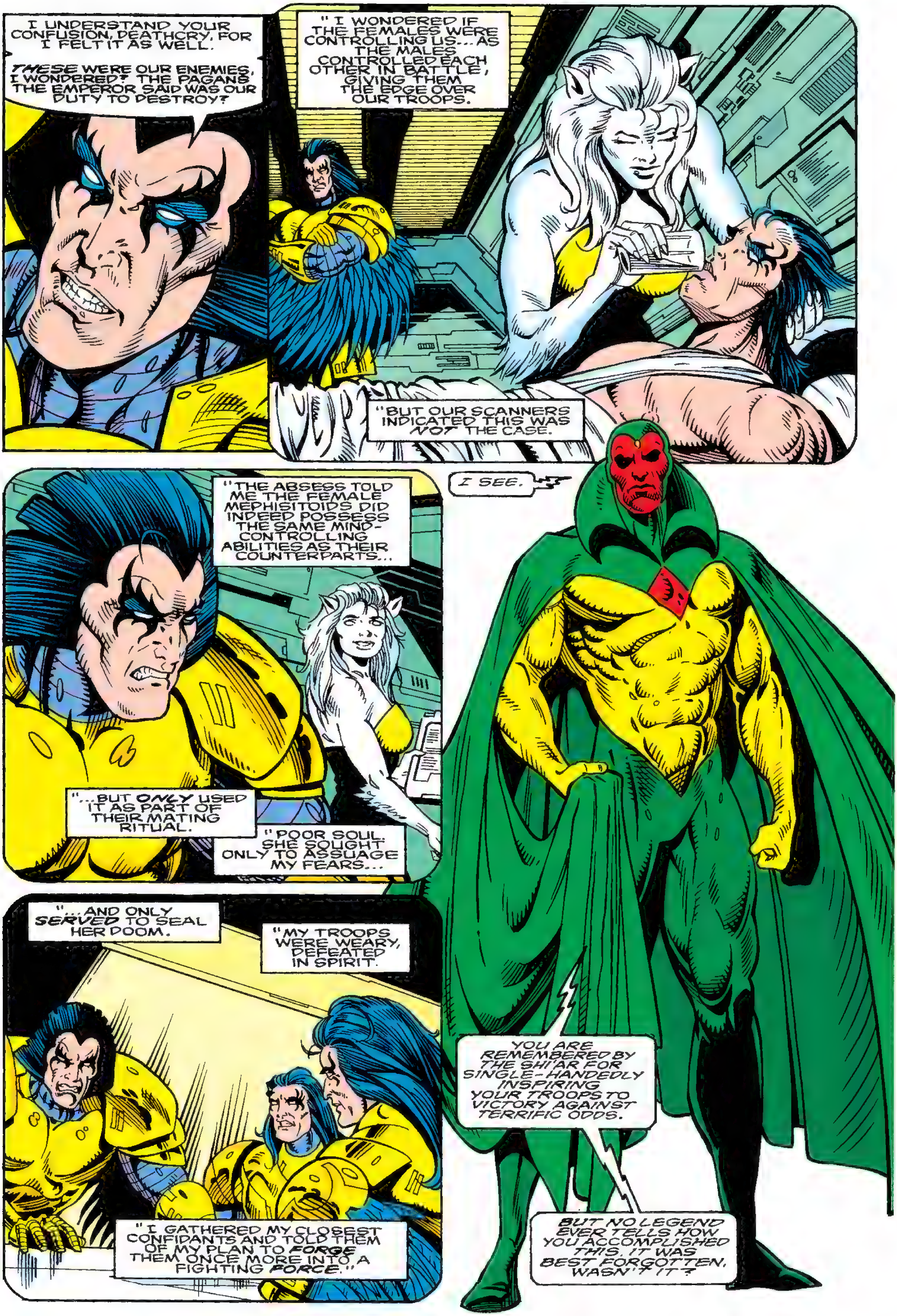

I SUSPECT THAT THE MEPHISITOID PHEROMONE POWER OF MIND CONTROL IS NOT AS EXCLUSIVE AS THE KREE THOUGHT--
--IS IT, T'KYLL ALABAR?
PHEROMONE?
THAT WAS IN THAT VIAL!? YOU USED THE MEPHISITOIDS' FOUL ABILITY ON CIR?!
THAT IS *NOT* THE SHI'AR WAY! IT *STINKS* OF COWARDICE!
IT *ACCOMPLISHED* OUR GOAL, DID IT NOT?
HOW VERY *LITTLE* THE EMPIRE HAS CHANGED. WIN THE WAR, ALABAR! FREE MY FRIENDS, ALABAR--
--BUT DO IT *ONLY* IN THE WAYS *WE* APPROVE OF!
CHILD, I SHOULD TAKE YOU *OVER* MY KNEE, BUT TIME IS RUNNING--
KA-BLASHKK
--OUT!


IT BE RUSE, I KNOW!
GREETINGS, FOUL ALABAR-- LONG TIME PAYBACK HAS COME!
MEPHISITOID, YOUR POWER IS FORMIDABLE.
THUS, IT IS IMPERATIVE YOU ARE KEPT FROM USING IT.
ARGGGHH
AS FOR YOUR WEAPON LIEUTENANT--
NO!

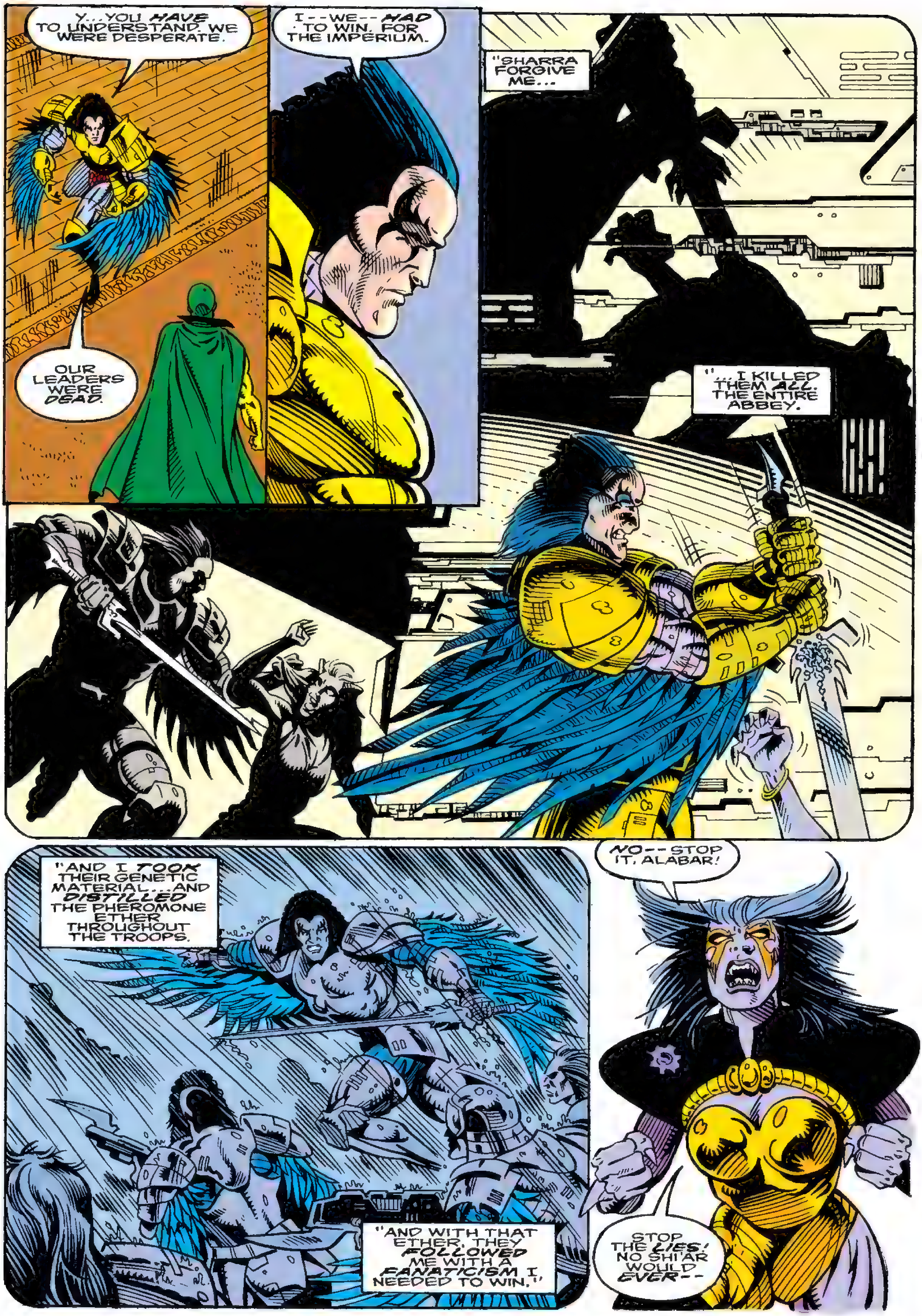

--WE HAVE NEED OF IT.
TO YOU, ALABAR.
YES...
...TO ME.
KA-TANG
VISION-- THE MEPHISITOID IS STILL CONSCIOUS!
KILL HIM, ALABAR, QUICKLY-- BEFORE HE CONTROLS US ALL!
KILL HIM, GIRL?
NO. I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF KILLING.
HERE, MY OLD FRIEND--
--OF FREE MIND AND SOUL, I GIVE YOU THIS WEAPON.
KILL ME IF YOU WISH. IF THAT WILL MAKE AMENDS.
BY KRYTHI! YOU ARE MAD!

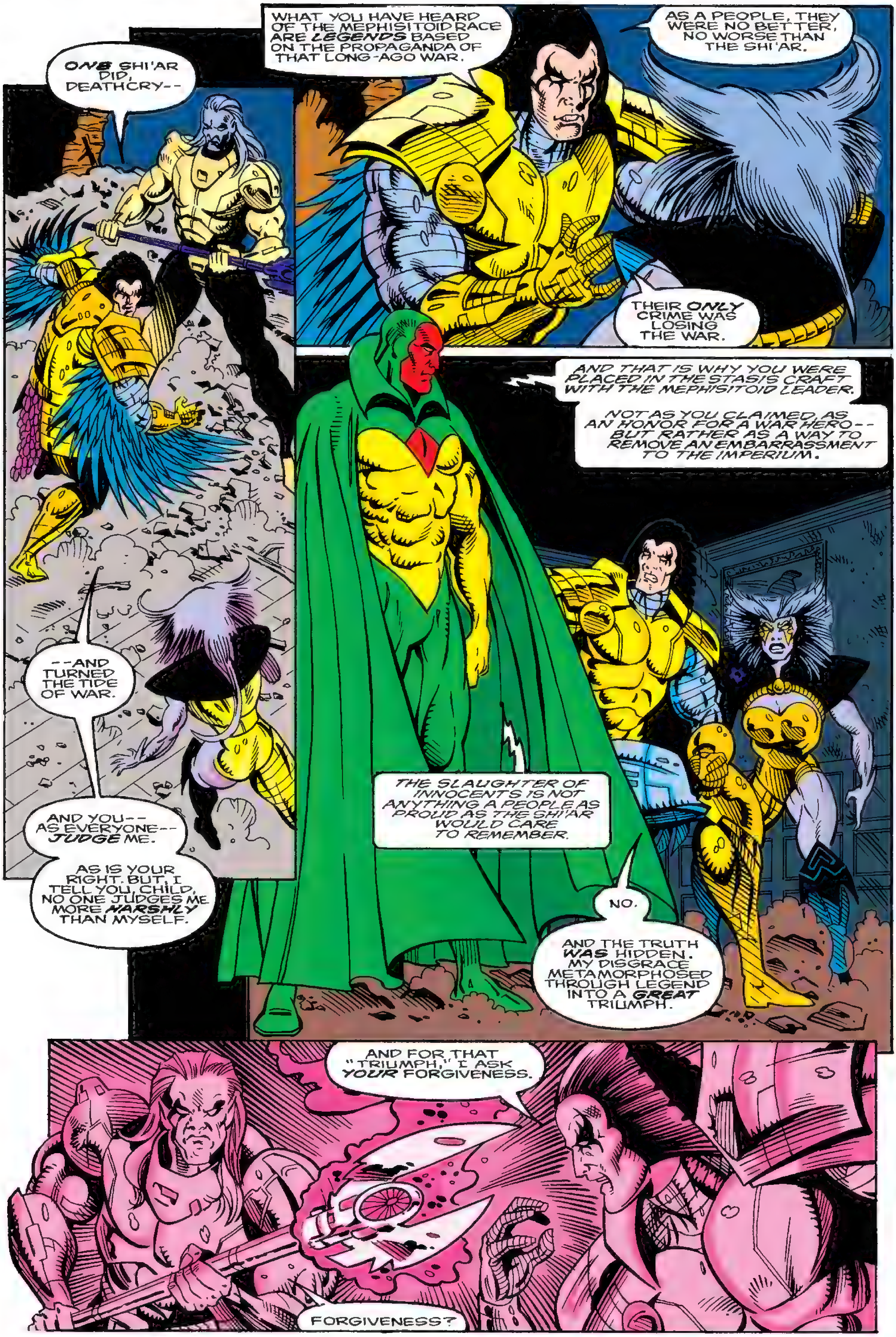

ADMIRAL-- FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE...
...BUT THE SHI'AR HAD ME *COMPLETELY* ENTHRALLED.
SILENCE, YOU YOUNG FOOL.
DON'T YOU *UNDERSTAND? THIS* IS WHAT WE CAME FOR!
ODD RACE YOU SHI'AR WERE--
--ODD RACE YOU REMAIN.
HE IS *NO* TRUE SHI'AR--
HE CANNOT BE THE T'KYLL ALABAR OF LEGEND! HE *CANNOT!*
NO, I AM NOT--
--FOR YOUR LEGEND IS A *LIE!*
"YES, PARTS ARE TRUE... OR AS TRUE AS THINGS CAN BE REMEMBERED *CENTURIES* AFTER THE FACT.
"OUR LEADERS WERE DEAD. THE FLEET DECIMATED.
"THE REMNANTS OF THE IMPERIUM'S PROUD ARMIES GATHERED TOGETHER, TAKING REFUGE ON A SMALL WORLD THAT HAD *LONG* BEEN COLONIZED BY THE MEPHISITOIDS...
"...AND THERE WE WAITED FOR THE COMING OF THEIR GRAND BATTALIONS, WAITING TO *DIE* FAR FROM HOME...
"...KNOWING WITH *OUR* DEATHS NOTHING STOOD BETWEEN THE EMPIRE AND *DEFEAT.*"

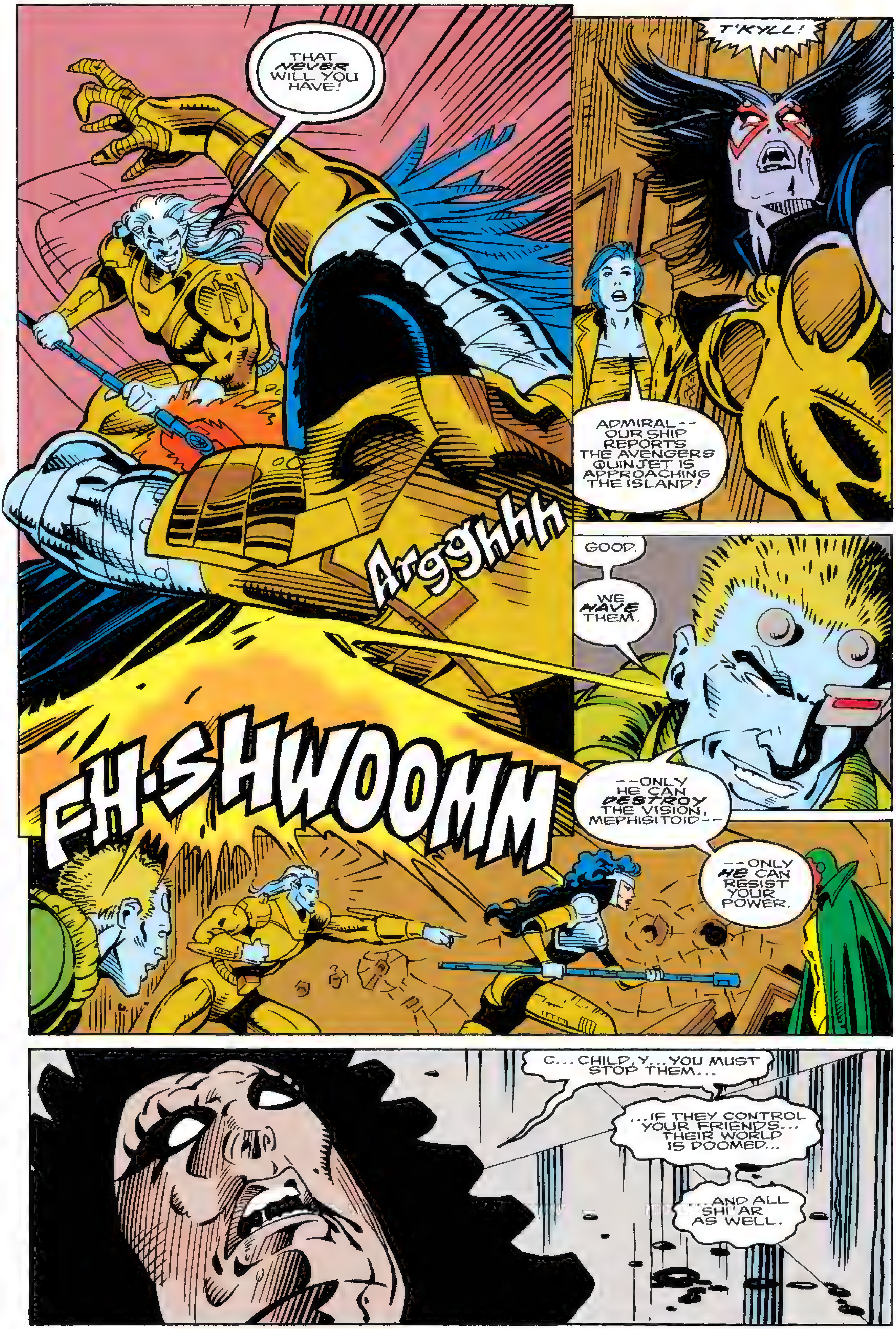

"I WAS LEFT IN COMMAND--A LOWLY OFFICER, PROMOTED THROUGH *DEATH*. A YOUNG MAN IN A POSITION OF POWER I WAS NEVER *MEANT* TO HAVE.
"I GATHERED MY DISPIRITED, DEFEATED MEN AND SEARCHED FOR A PLACE FOR OUR *LAST*, GRAND STAND...
"...AND I FOUND IT.
"AND WAS *AMAZED* WHO BID US WELCOME AT THE DOOR.
"FOR WE HAD *STUMBLED* UPON AN *ABBEY*--A PLACE OF MEPHISITOID WORSHIP HOUSED BY THE *FEMALES* OF THEIR RACE.
"WE HAD *NEVER* SEEN THEIR LIKE. FOR THE MALES HAD LONG HIDDEN THEIR MATES FROM US.
"BUT THESE WOMEN TOOK *PITY* ON US AND TOOK US IN.
"THEY CLOTHED US, FED US, *HEALED* US OUR INJURIES.
"AND SPOKE TO US OF *PEACE* BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES."
THAT IS A *LIE*! A *PATHETIC* FAIRY TALE.
THE MEPHISITOIDS ARE *BARBARIANS*! THEY *KILLED* INDISCRIMINATELY.
SO *WE* THOUGHT THE SHI'AR.

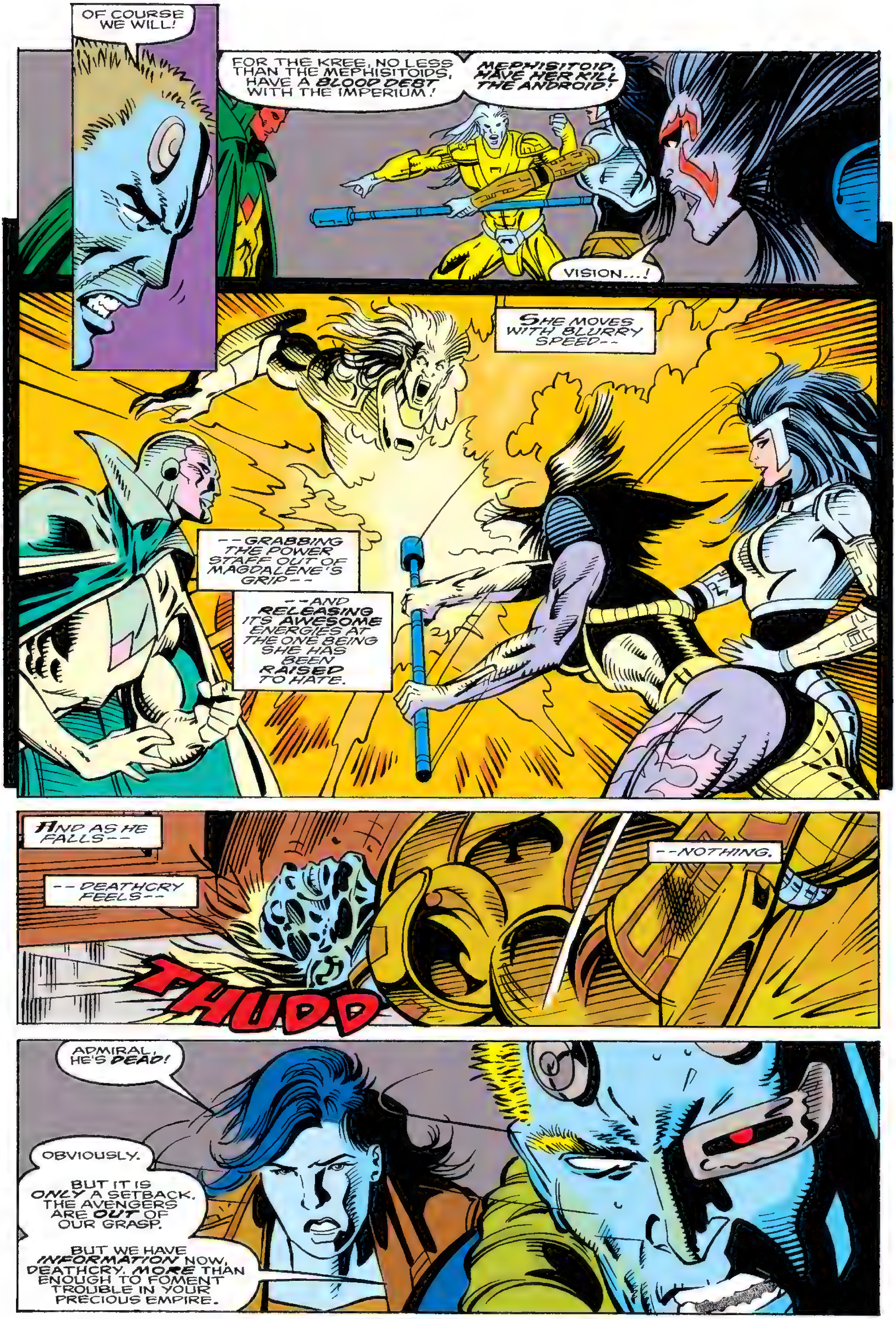

I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONFUSION, DEATHCRY, FOR I FELT IT AS WELL.

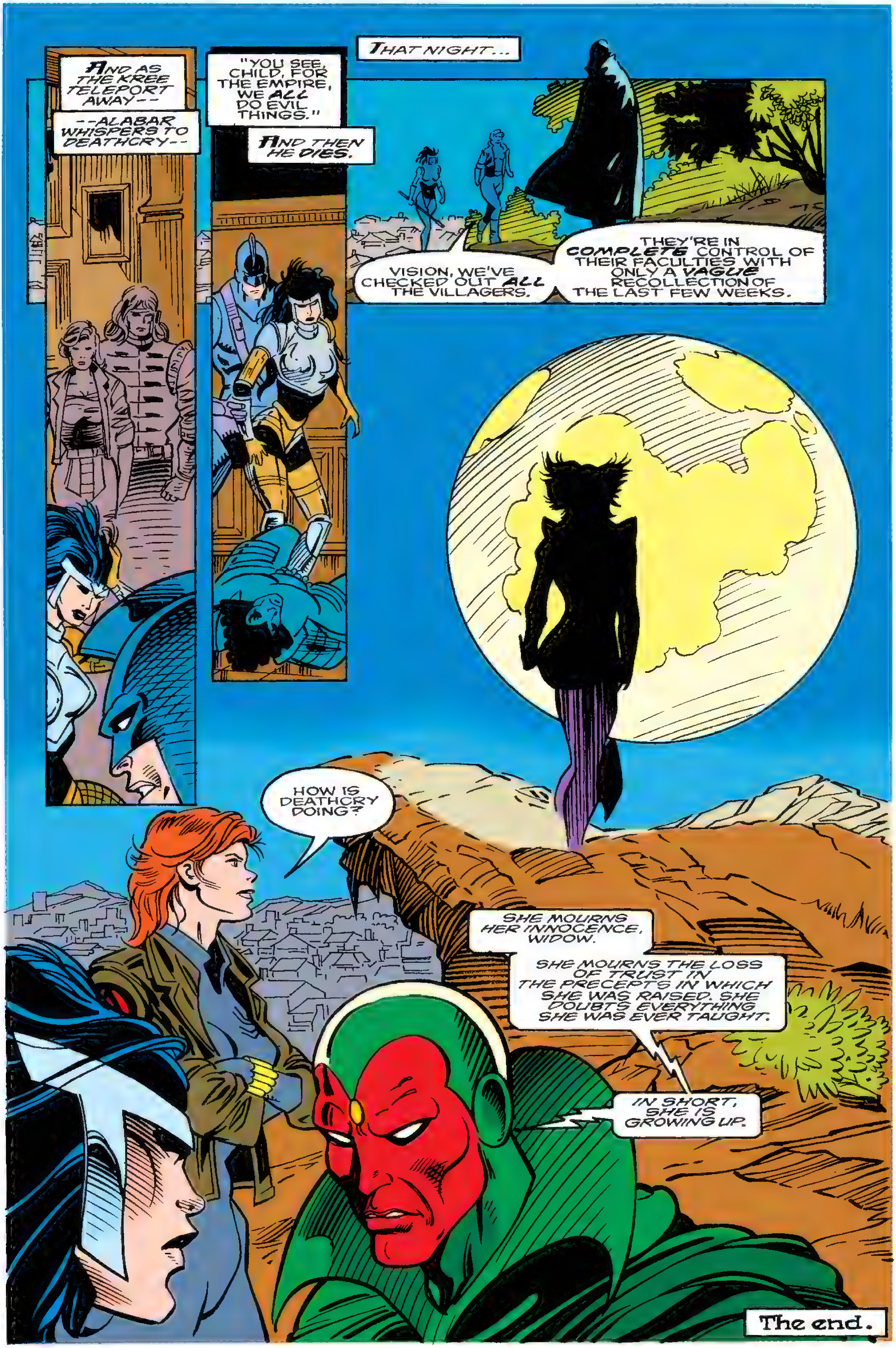
THESE WERE OUR ENEMIES, I WONDERED? THE PAGANS THE EMPEROR SAID WAS OUR DUTY TO DESTROY?
"I WONDERED IF THE FEMALES WERE CONTROLLING US... AS THE MALES CONTROLLED EACH OTHER IN BATTLE, GIVING THEM THE EDGE OVER OUR TROOPS.
"BUT OUR SCANNERS INDICATED THIS WAS *NOT* THE CASE.
I SEE.
"THE ABSESS TOLD ME THE FEMALE MEPHISITOIDS DID INDEED POSSESS THE SAME MIND-CONTROLLING ABILITIES AS THEIR COUNTERPARTS...
"...BUT *ONLY* USED IT AS PART OF THEIR MATING RITUAL.
"POOR SOUL. SHE SOUGHT ONLY TO ASSUAGE MY FEARS...
"...AND ONLY *SERVED* TO SEAL HER DOOM.
"MY TROOPS WERE WEARY, DEFEATED IN SPIRIT.
"I GATHERED MY CLOSEST CONFIDANTS AND TOLD THEM OF MY PLAN TO *FORGE* THEM ONCE MORE INTO A FIGHTING *FORCE*."
YOU ARE REMEMBERED BY THE SHI'AR FOR SINGLE-HANDEDLY INSPIRING YOUR TROOPS TO VICTORY AGAINST TERRIFIC ODDS.
BUT NO LEGEND EVER TELLS HOW YOU ACCOMPLISHED THIS. IT WAS BEST FORGOTTEN, WASN'T IT?


Y...YOU *HAVE* TO UNDERSTAND. WE WERE DESPERATE.
OUR LEADERS WERE *DEAD*.
I--WE--*HAD* TO WIN. FOR THE IMPERIUM.
"SHARRA FORGIVE ME...
"...I KILLED THEM *ALL*. THE ENTIRE ABBEY.
"AND I *TOOK* THEIR GENETIC MATERIAL...AND *DISTILLED* THE PHEROMONE ETHER THROUGHOUT THE TROOPS.
"AND WITH THAT ETHER, THEY *FOLLOWED* ME WITH A *FANATICISM* I NEEDED TO WIN."
NO--STOP IT, ALABAR!
STOP THE *LIES*! NO SHI'AR WOULD *EVER*--

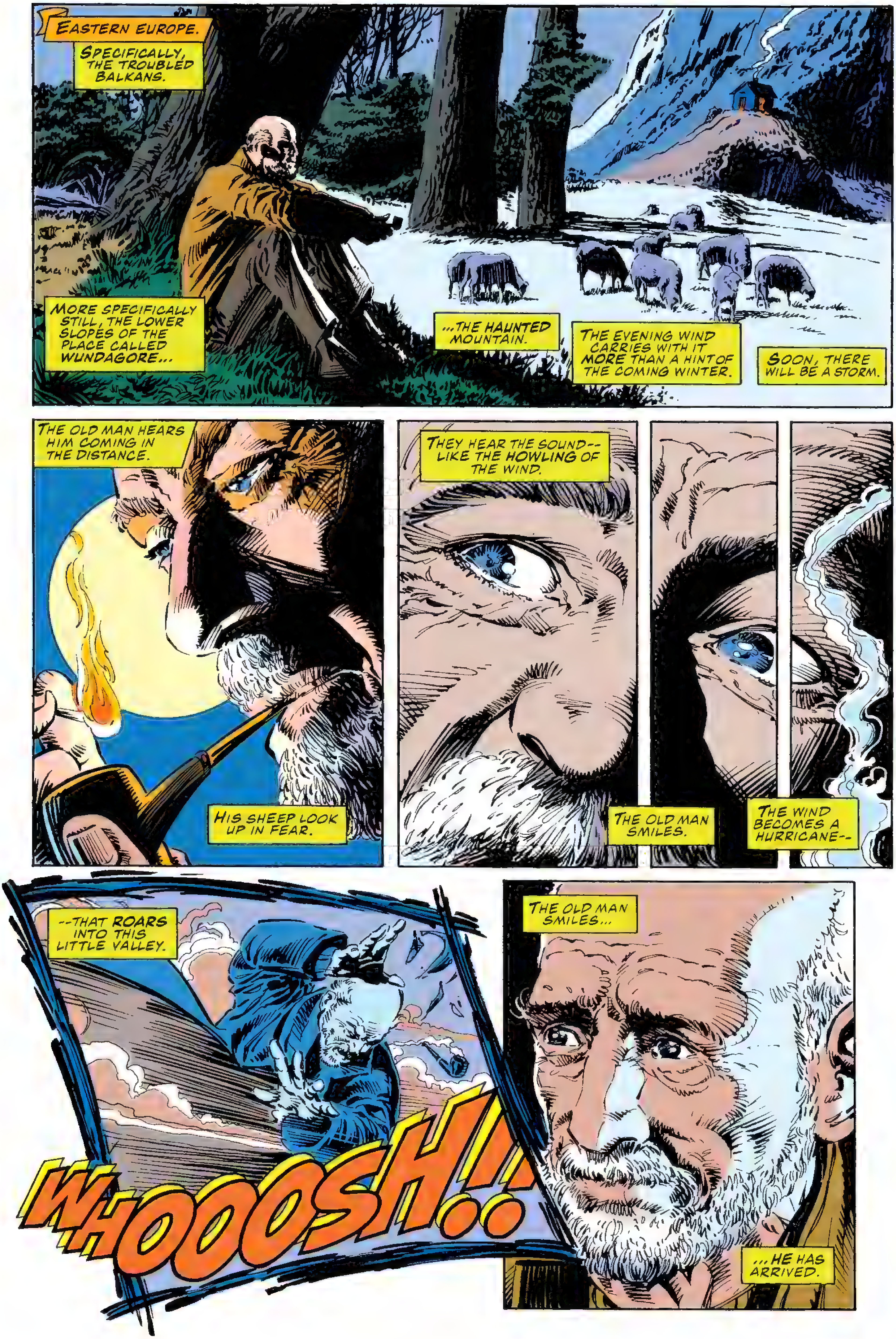

WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE MEPHISITOID RACE ARE *LEGENDS* BASED ON THE PROPAGANDA OF THAT LONG-AGO WAR.
AS A PEOPLE, THEY WERE NO BETTER, NO WORSE THAN THE SHI'AR.
THEIR *ONLY* CRIME WAS LOSING THE WAR.
ONE SHI'AR DID, DEATHCRY--
--AND TURNED THE TIDE OF WAR.
AND YOU-- AS EVERYONE-- *JUDGE* ME.
AS IS YOUR RIGHT. BUT, I TELL YOU, CHILD, NO ONE JUDGES ME MORE *HARSHLY* THAN MYSELF.
AND THAT IS WHY YOU WERE PLACED IN THE STASIS CRAFT WITH THE MEPHISITOID LEADER.
NOT AS YOU CLAIMED, AS AN HONOR FOR A WAR HERO-- BUT RATHER AS A WAY TO REMOVE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE IMPERIUM.
THE SLAUGHTER OF INNOCENTS IS NOT ANYTHING A PEOPLE AS PROUD AS THE SHI'AR WOULD CARE TO REMEMBER.
NO.
AND THE TRUTH *WAS* HIDDEN. MY DISGRACE METAMORPHOSED THROUGH LEGEND INTO A *GREAT* TRIUMPH.
AND FOR THAT "TRIUMPH," I ASK *YOUR* FORGIVENESS.
FORGIVENESS?

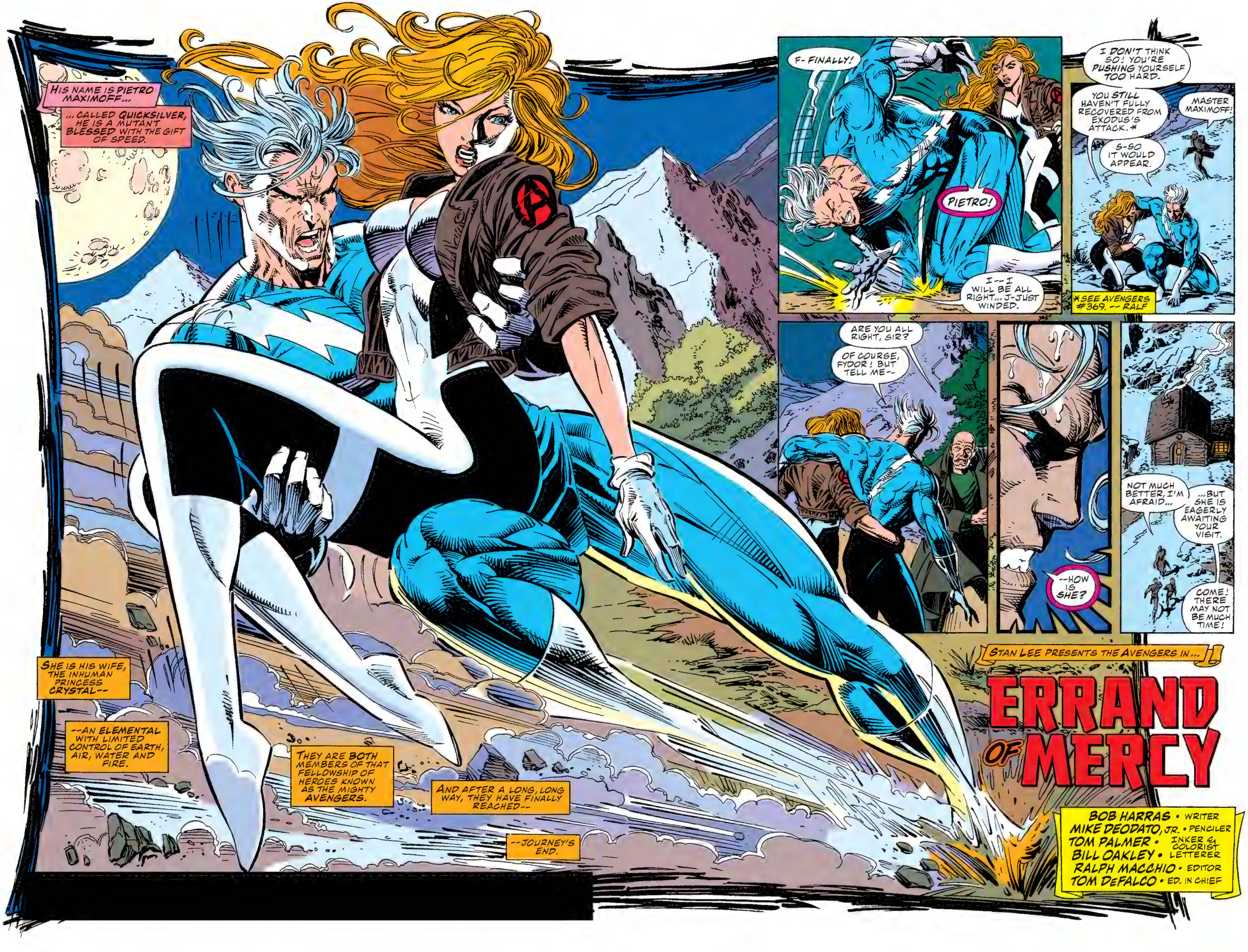

THAT NEVER WILL YOU HAVE!
Argghhh
F-H-SHWOOMM
T'KYLL!
ADMIRAL-- OUR SHIP REPORTS THE AVENGERS QUINJET IS APPROACHING THE ISLAND!
GOOD.
WE HAVE THEM.
--ONLY HE CAN DESTROY THE VISION, MEPHISITOID--
--ONLY HE CAN RESIST YOUR POWER.
C... CHILD, Y... YOU MUST STOP THEM...
...IF THEY CONTROL YOUR FRIENDS... THEIR WORLD IS DOOMED...
...AND ALL SHI'AR AS WELL.

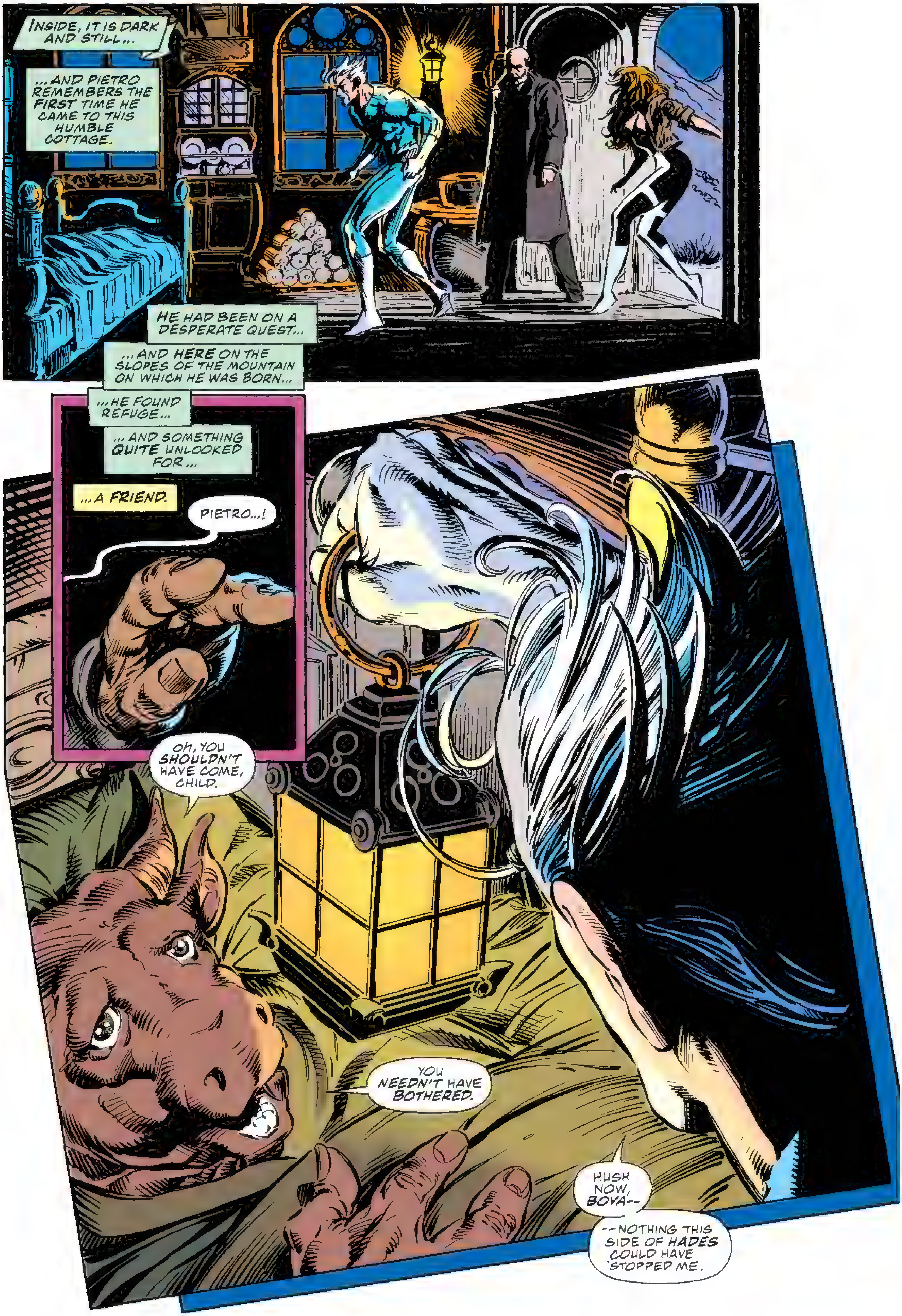

OF COURSE WE WILL!
FOR THE KREE, NO LESS THAN THE MEPHISITOIDS, HAVE A BLOOD DEBT WITH THE IMPERIUM!
MEPHISITOID, HAVE HER KILL THE ANDROID!
VISION...!
SHE MOVES WITH BLURRY SPEED--
--GRABBING THE POWER STAFF OUT OF MAGDALENE'S GRIP--
--AND RELEASING ITS AWESOME ENERGIES AT THE ONE BEING SHE HAS BEEN RAISED TO HATE.
AND AS HE FALLS--
--DEATHCRY FEELS--
--NOTHING.
THUDD
ADMIRAL, HE'S DEAD!
OBVIOUSLY.
BUT IT IS ONLY A SETBACK. THE AVENGERS ARE OUT OF OUR GRASP.
BUT WE HAVE INFORMATION NOW, DEATHCRY. MORE THAN ENOUGH TO FOMENT TROUBLE IN YOUR PRECIOUS EMPIRE.

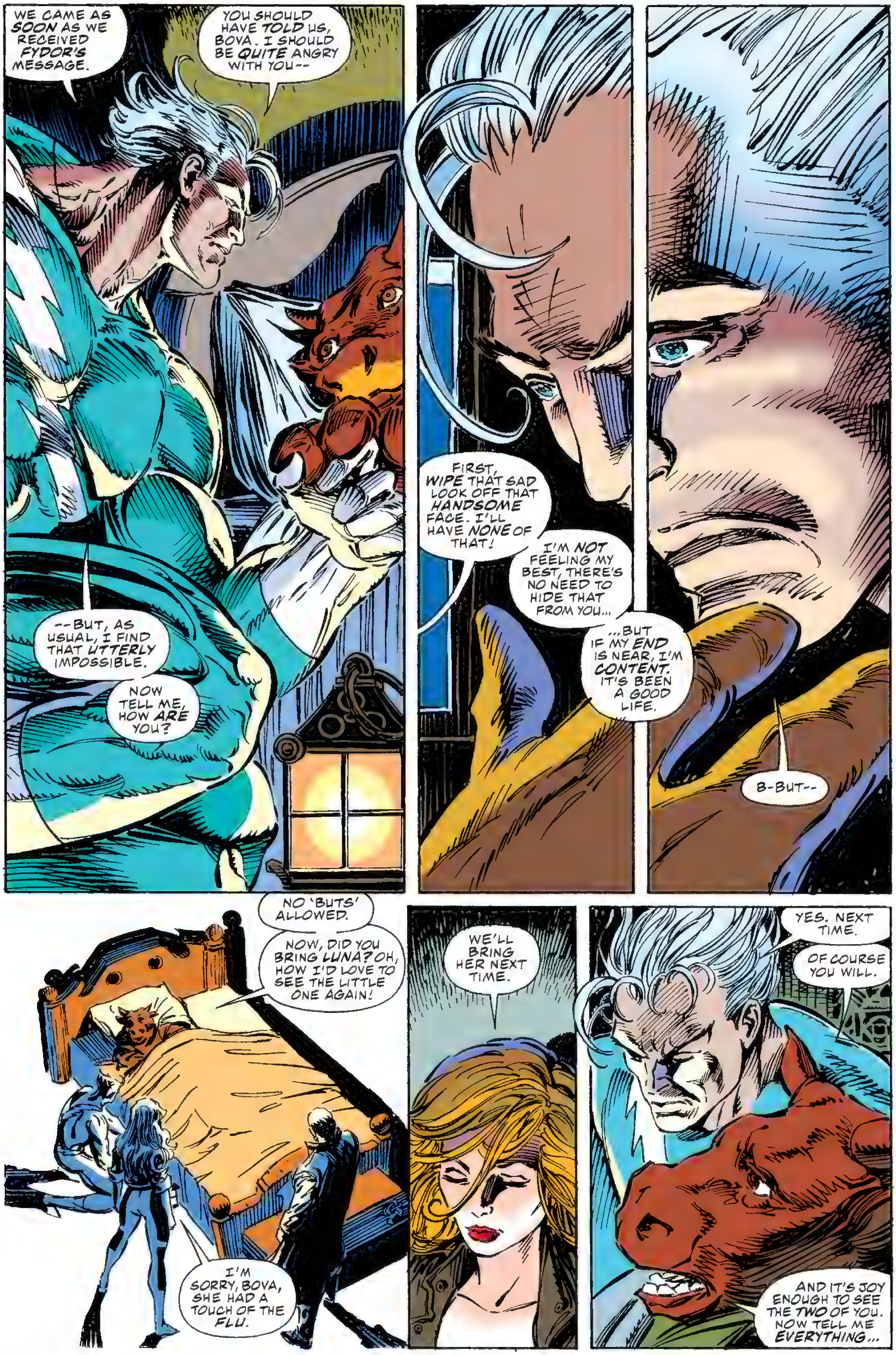

AND AS THE KREE TELEPORT AWAY--
--ALABAR WHISPERS TO DEATHCRY--
"YOU SEE, CHILD, FOR THE EMPIRE, WE ALL DO EVIL THINGS."
AND THEN HE DIES.
THAT NIGHT...
VISION, WE'VE CHECKED OUT ALL THE VILLAGERS.
THEY'RE IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THEIR FACULTIES WITH ONLY A VAGUE RECOLLECTION OF THE LAST FEW WEEKS.
HOW IS DEATHCRY DOING?
SHE MOURNS HER INNOCENCE, WIDOW.
SHE MOURNS THE LOSS OF TRUST IN THE PRECEPTS IN WHICH SHE WAS RAISED. SHE DOUBTS EVERYTHING SHE WAS EVER TAUGHT.
IN SHORT, SHE IS GROWING UP.
The end.

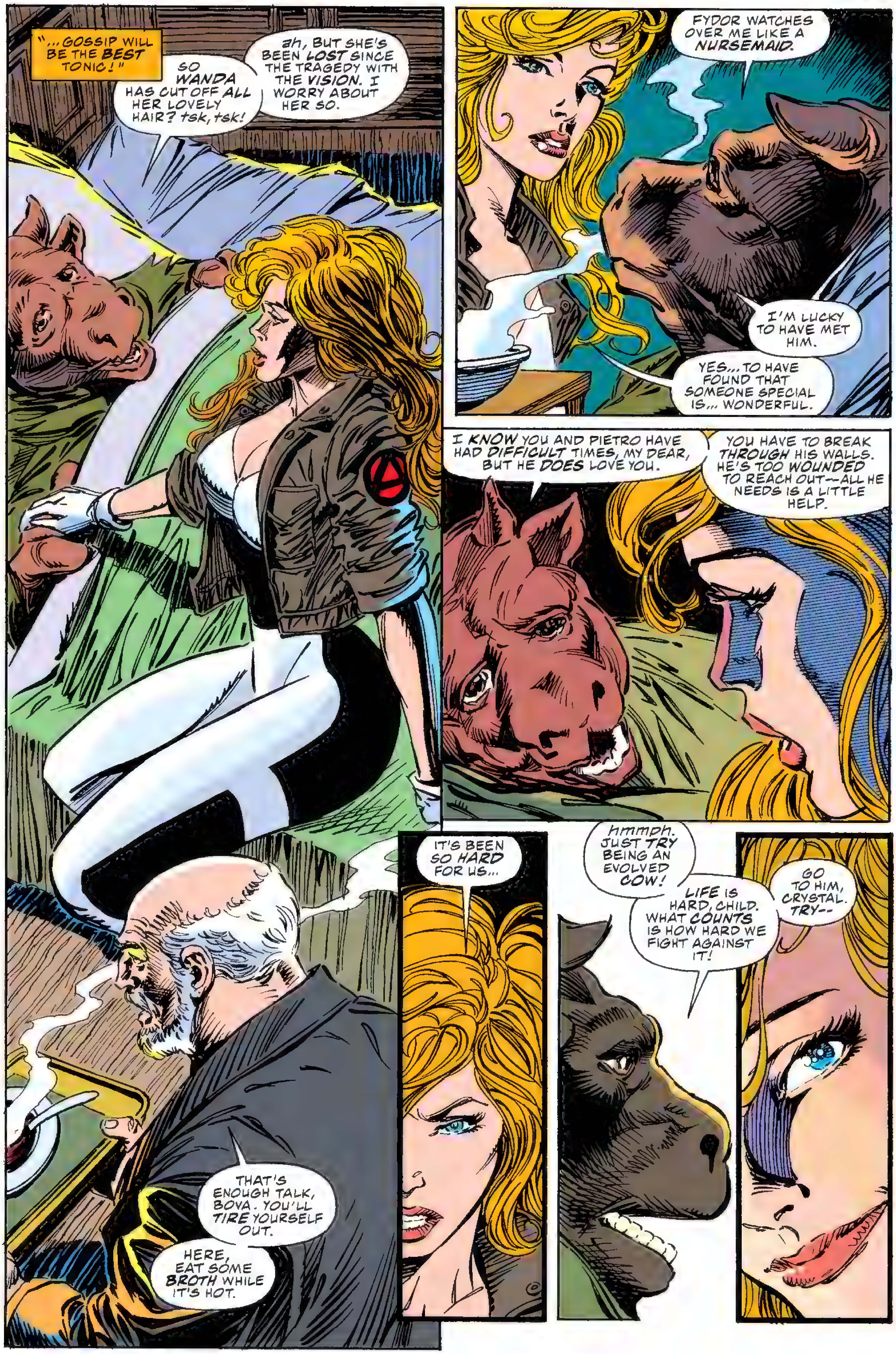
MARVEL COMICS
380
NOV '94
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
GODHEAD!
EPTING
PALMER

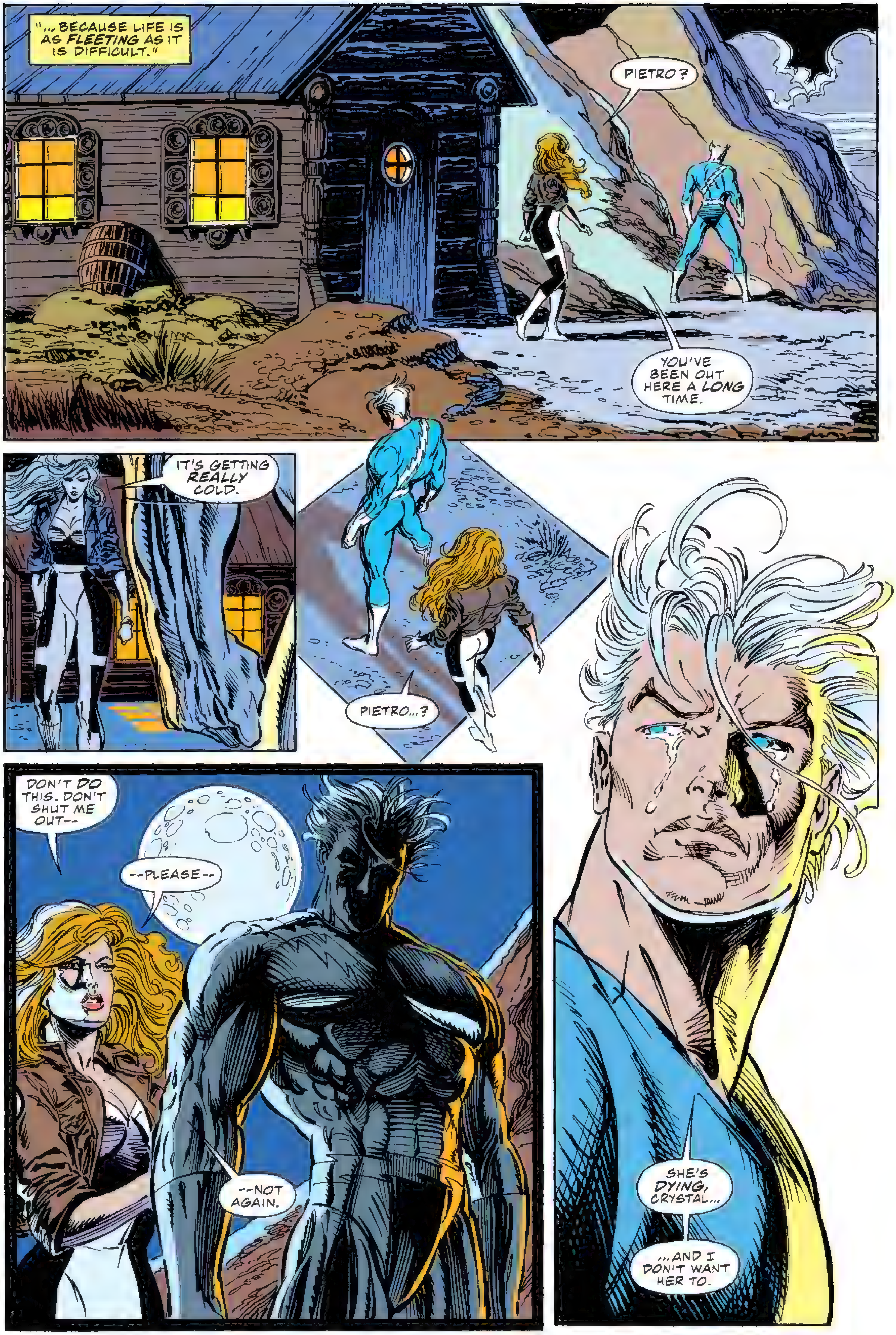

EASTERN EUROPE.
SPECIFICALLY, THE TROUBLED BALKANS.
MORE SPECIFICALLY STILL, THE LOWER SLOPES OF THE PLACE CALLED WUNDAGORE...
...THE HAUNTED MOUNTAIN.
THE EVENING WIND CARRIES WITH IT MORE THAN A HINT OF THE COMING WINTER.
SOON, THERE WILL BE A STORM.
THE OLD MAN HEARS HIM COMING IN THE DISTANCE.
HIS SHEEP LOOK UP IN FEAR.
THEY HEAR THE SOUND-- LIKE THE HOWLING OF THE WIND.
THE OLD MAN SMILES.
THE WIND BECOMES A HURRICANE--
--THAT ROARS INTO THIS LITTLE VALLEY.
WHOOOSH!!..
THE OLD MAN SMILES...
...HE HAS ARRIVED.

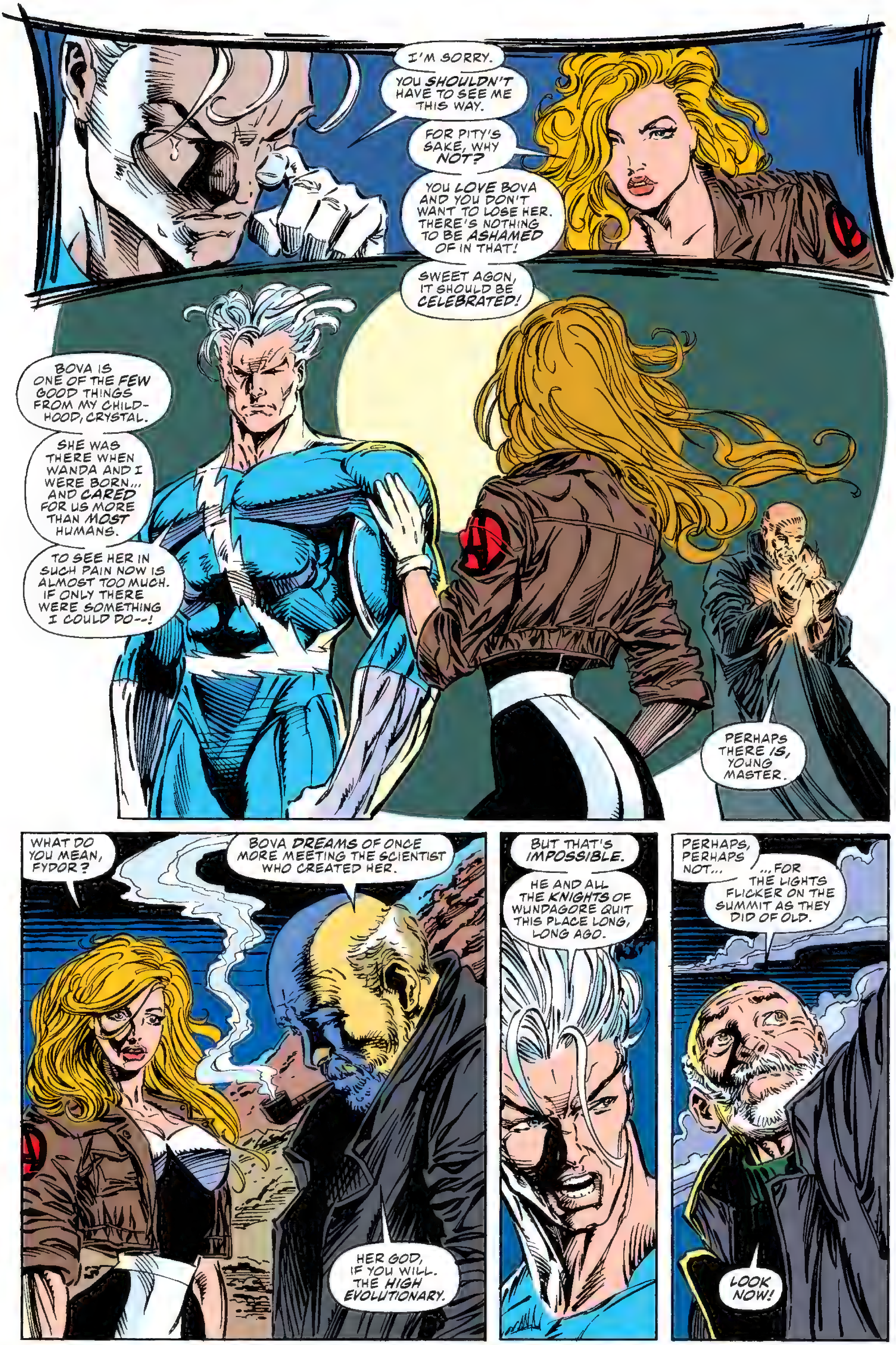

HIS NAME IS PIETRO MAXIMOFF...
...CALLED QUICKSILVER, HE IS A MUTANT BLESSED WITH THE GIFT OF SPEED.
SHE IS HIS WIFE, THE INHUMAN PRINCESS CRYSTAL--
--AN ELEMENTAL WITH LIMITED CONTROL OF EARTH, AIR, WATER AND FIRE.
THEY ARE BOTH MEMBERS OF THAT FELLOWSHIP OF HEROES KNOWN AS THE MIGHTY AVENGERS.
AND AFTER A LONG, LONG WAY, THEY HAVE FINALLY REACHED--
--JOURNEY'S END.
F- FINALLY!
PIETRO!
I--I WILL BE ALL RIGHT... J-JUST WINDED.
I DON'T THINK SO! YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD.
YOU STILL HAVEN'T FULLY RECOVERED FROM EXODUS'S ATTACK.*
S-SO IT WOULD APPEAR.
MASTER MAXIMOFF!
*SEE AVENGERS #369. --RALF
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SIR?
OF COURSE, FYDOR! BUT TELL ME--
--HOW IS SHE?
NOT MUCH BETTER, I'M AFRAID...
...BUT SHE IS EAGERLY AWAITING YOUR VISIT.
COME! THERE MAY NOT BE MUCH TIME!
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE AVENGERS IN...
ERRAND OF MERCY
BOB HARRAS • WRITER
MIKE DEODATO, JR. • PENCILER
TOM PALMER • INKER & COLORIST
BILL OAKLEY • LETTERER
RALPH MACCHIO • EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO • ED. IN CHIEF


INSIDE, IT IS DARK AND STILL...
...AND PIETRO REMEMBERS THE FIRST TIME HE CAME TO THIS HUMBLE COTTAGE.
HE HAD BEEN ON A DESPERATE QUEST...
...AND HERE ON THE SLOPES OF THE MOUNTAIN ON WHICH HE WAS BORN...
...HE FOUND REFUGE...
...AND SOMETHING QUITE UNLOOKED FOR...
...A FRIEND.
PIETRO...!
OH, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME, CHILD.
YOU NEEDN'T HAVE BOTHERED.
HUSH NOW, BOVA--
--NOTHING THIS SIDE OF HADES COULD HAVE STOPPED ME.

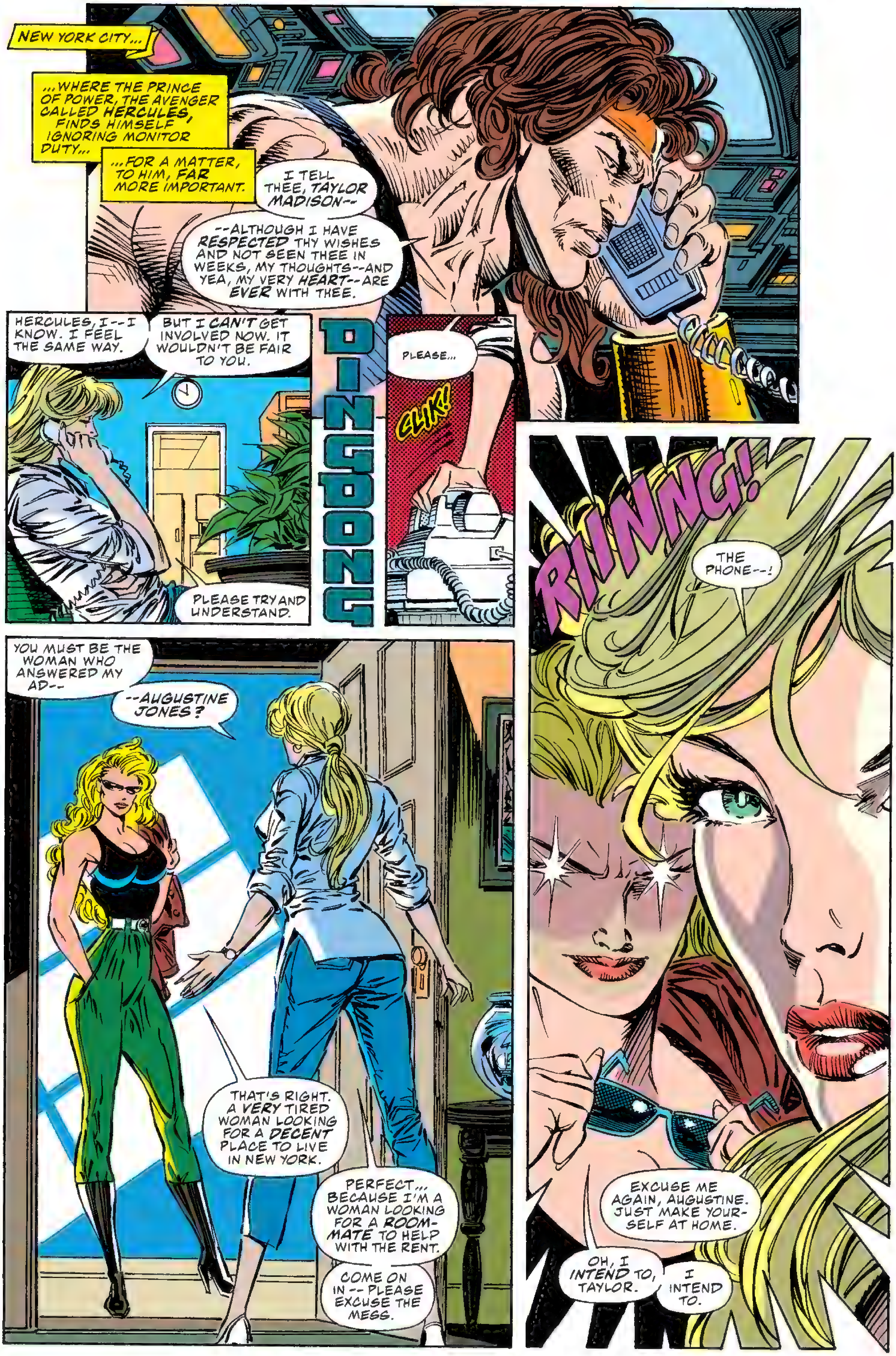

WE CAME AS SOON AS WE RECEIVED FYDOR'S MESSAGE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD US, BOVA. I SHOULD BE QUITE ANGRY WITH YOU--
--BUT, AS USUAL, I FIND THAT UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE.
NOW TELL ME, HOW ARE YOU?
FIRST, WIPE THAT SAD LOOK OFF THAT HANDSOME FACE. I'LL HAVE NONE OF THAT!
I'M NOT FEELING MY BEST, THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE THAT FROM YOU...
...BUT IF MY END IS NEAR, I'M CONTENT. IT'S BEEN A GOOD LIFE.
B-BUT--
NO 'BUTS' ALLOWED.
NOW, DID YOU BRING LUNA? OH, HOW I'D LOVE TO SEE THE LITTLE ONE AGAIN!
I'M SORRY, BOVA, SHE HAD A TOUCH OF THE FLU.
WE'LL BRING HER NEXT TIME.
YES. NEXT TIME.
OF COURSE YOU WILL.
AND IT'S JOY ENOUGH TO SEE THE TWO OF YOU. NOW TELL ME EVERYTHING...


"...GOSSIP WILL BE THE BEST TONIC!"
SO WANDA HAS CUT OFF ALL HER LOVELY HAIR? tsk, tsk!
ah, BUT SHE'S BEEN LOST SINCE THE TRAGEDY WITH THE VISION. I WORRY ABOUT HER SO.
FYDOR WATCHES OVER ME LIKE A NURSEMAID.
I'M LUCKY TO HAVE MET HIM.
YES... TO HAVE FOUND THAT SOMEONE SPECIAL IS... WONDERFUL.
I KNOW YOU AND PIETRO HAVE HAD DIFFICULT TIMES, MY DEAR, BUT HE DOES LOVE YOU.
YOU HAVE TO BREAK THROUGH HIS WALLS. HE'S TOO WOUNDED TO REACH OUT--ALL HE NEEDS IS A LITTLE HELP.
THAT'S ENOUGH TALK, BOVA. YOU'LL TIRE YOURSELF OUT.
HERE, EAT SOME BROTH WHILE IT'S HOT.
IT'S BEEN SO HARD FOR US...
hmmph. JUST TRY BEING AN EVOLVED COW!
LIFE IS HARD, CHILD. WHAT COUNTS IS HOW HARD WE FIGHT AGAINST IT!
GO TO HIM, CRYSTAL. TRY--

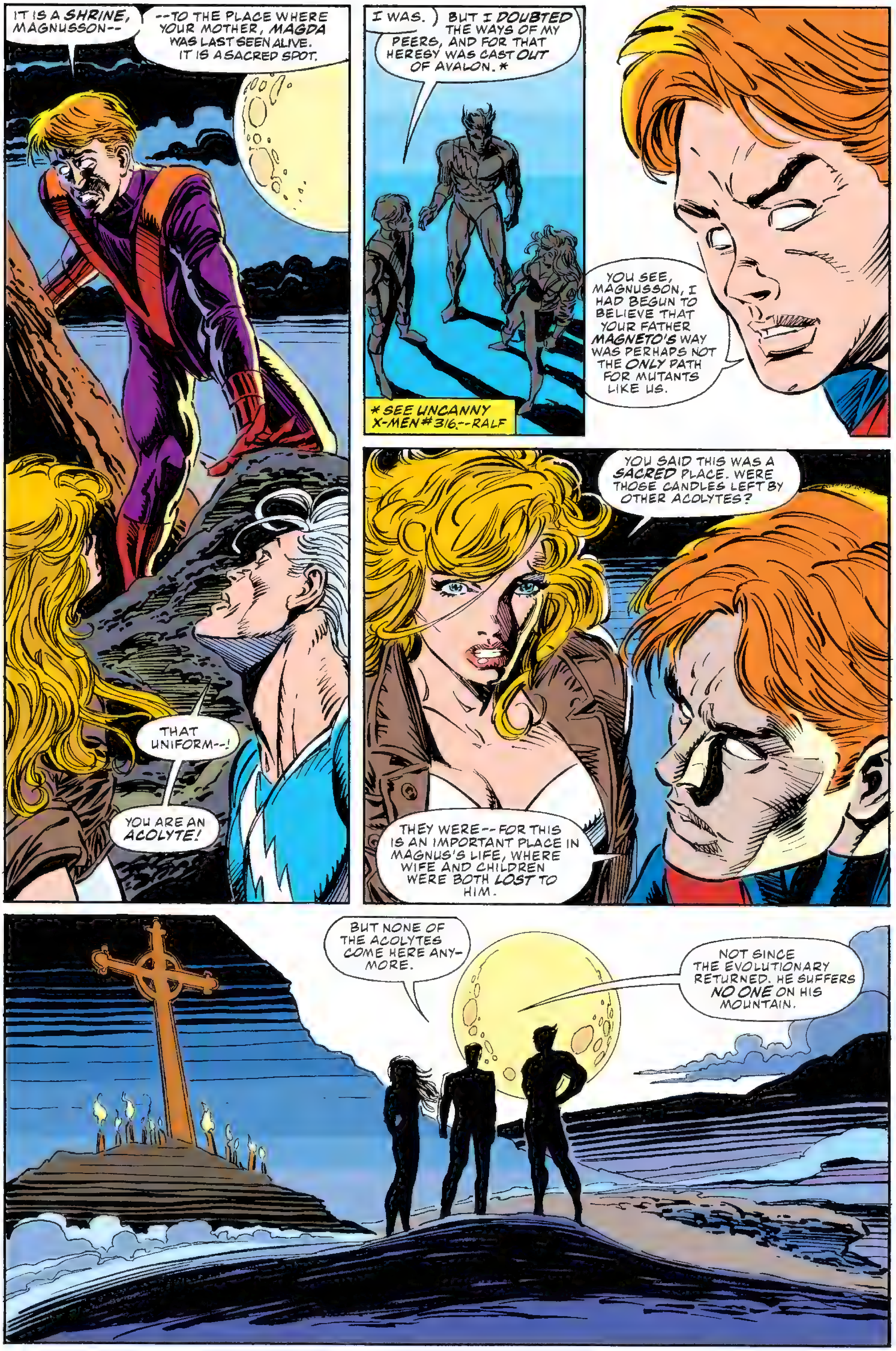

"...BECAUSE LIFE IS AS FLEETING AS IT IS DIFFICULT."
PIETRO?
YOU'VE BEEN OUT HERE A LONG TIME.
IT'S GETTING REALLY COLD.
PIETRO...?
DON'T DO THIS. DON'T SHUT ME OUT--
--PLEASE--
--NOT AGAIN.
SHE'S DYING, CRYSTAL...
...AND I DON'T WANT HER TO.

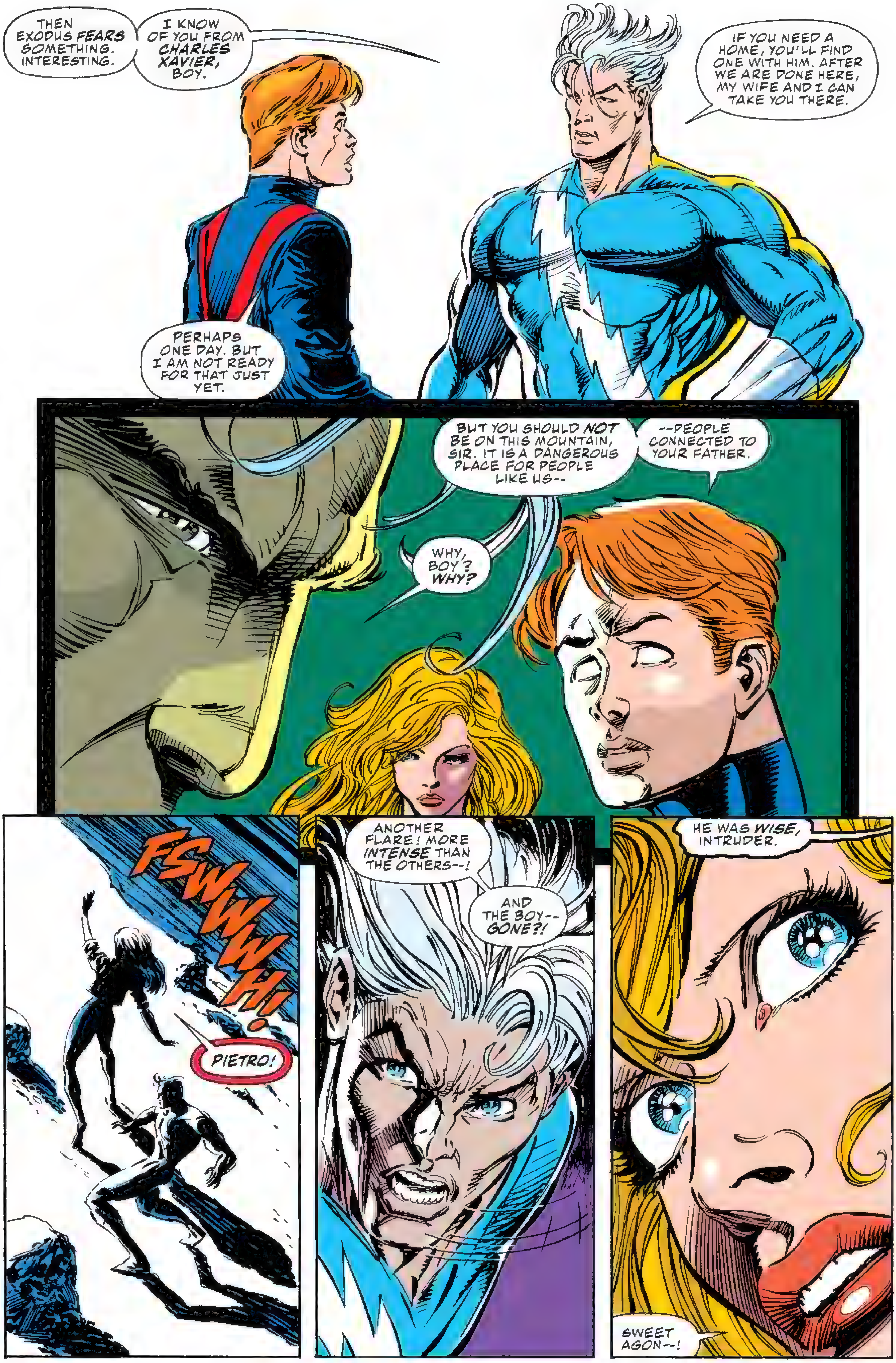

I'M SORRY.
YOU *SHOULDN'T* HAVE TO SEE ME THIS WAY.
FOR PITY'S SAKE, WHY *NOT?*
YOU *LOVE* BOVA AND YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE HER. THERE'S NOTHING TO BE *ASHAMED* OF IN THAT!
SWEET AGON, IT SHOULD BE *CELEBRATED!*
BOVA IS ONE OF THE *FEW* GOOD THINGS FROM MY CHILDHOOD, CRYSTAL.
SHE WAS THERE WHEN WANDA AND I WERE BORN... AND *CARED* FOR US MORE THAN *MOST* HUMANS.
TO SEE HER IN SUCH PAIN NOW IS ALMOST TOO MUCH. IF ONLY THERE WERE SOMETHING I COULD DO--!
PERHAPS THERE *IS*, YOUNG MASTER.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, FYDOR?
BOVA *DREAMS* OF ONCE MORE MEETING THE SCIENTIST WHO CREATED HER.
HER GOD, IF YOU WILL. THE *HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.*
BUT THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE.*
HE AND ALL THE *KNIGHTS* OF WUNDAGORE QUIT THIS PLACE LONG, LONG AGO.
PERHAPS, PERHAPS NOT...
...FOR THE LIGHTS FLICKER ON THE SUMMIT AS THEY DID OF OLD.
LOOK NOW!

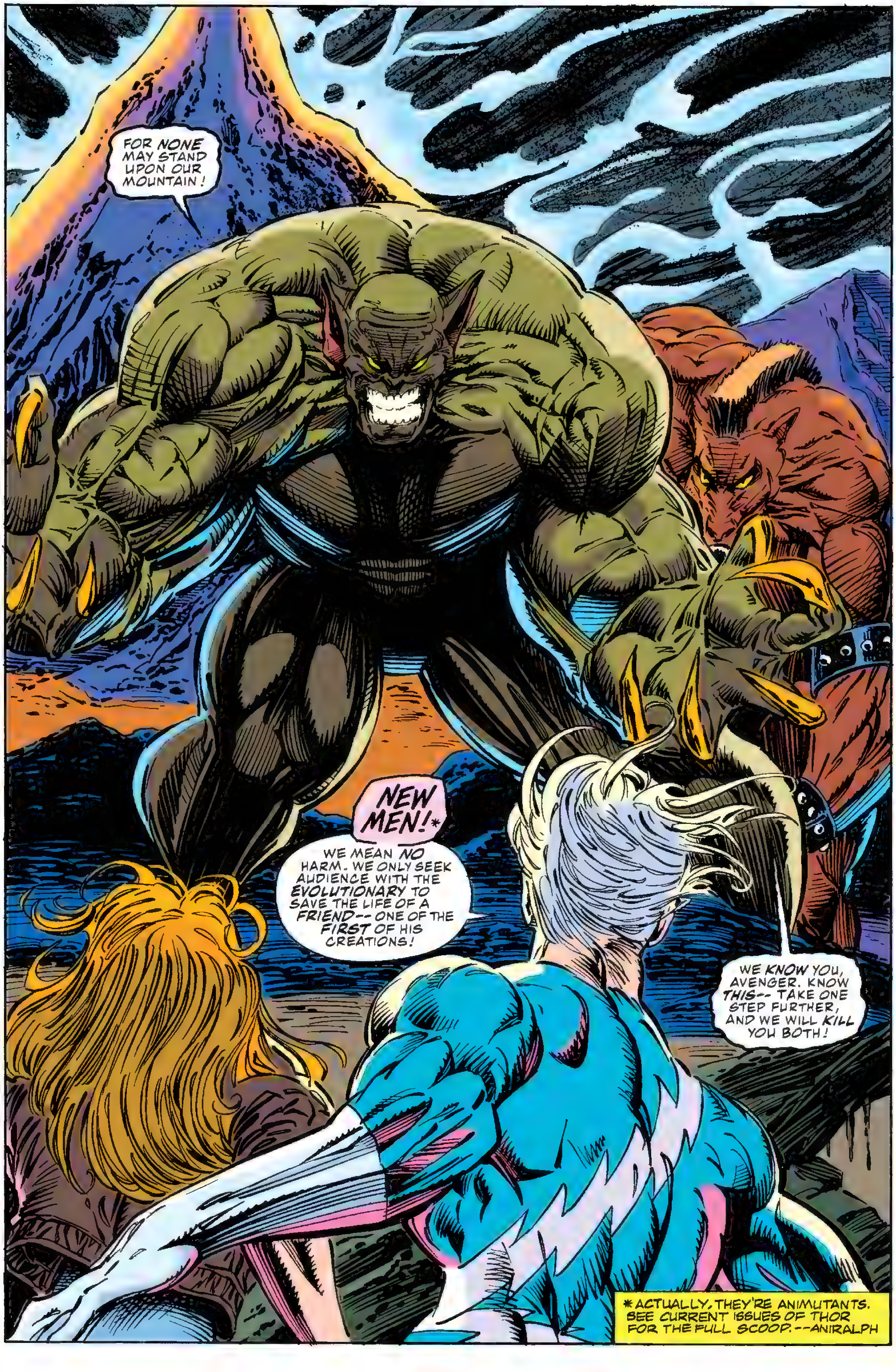
PIETRO...? HE'S RIGHT! THE MOUNTAINTOP IS...
...GLOWING.
AS IF TOUCHED BY *ST. ELMO'S FIRE.*
THE PEOPLE WHISPER THAT THE *GREAT WORK* HAS ONCE MORE BEGUN THERE IN THE HIGH PLACE.
IF THAT *IS* TRUE, IF THE EVOLUTIONARY *HAS* RETURNED-- THEN BOVA MAY BE *SAVED!*
FYDOR, I PROMISE YOU THIS NIGHT I WILL KNOCK ON THE DOORS OF WUNDAGORE ITSELF--
--AND IF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY DOES NOT ANSWER, I SHALL *TEAR* THEM DOWN MYSELF!

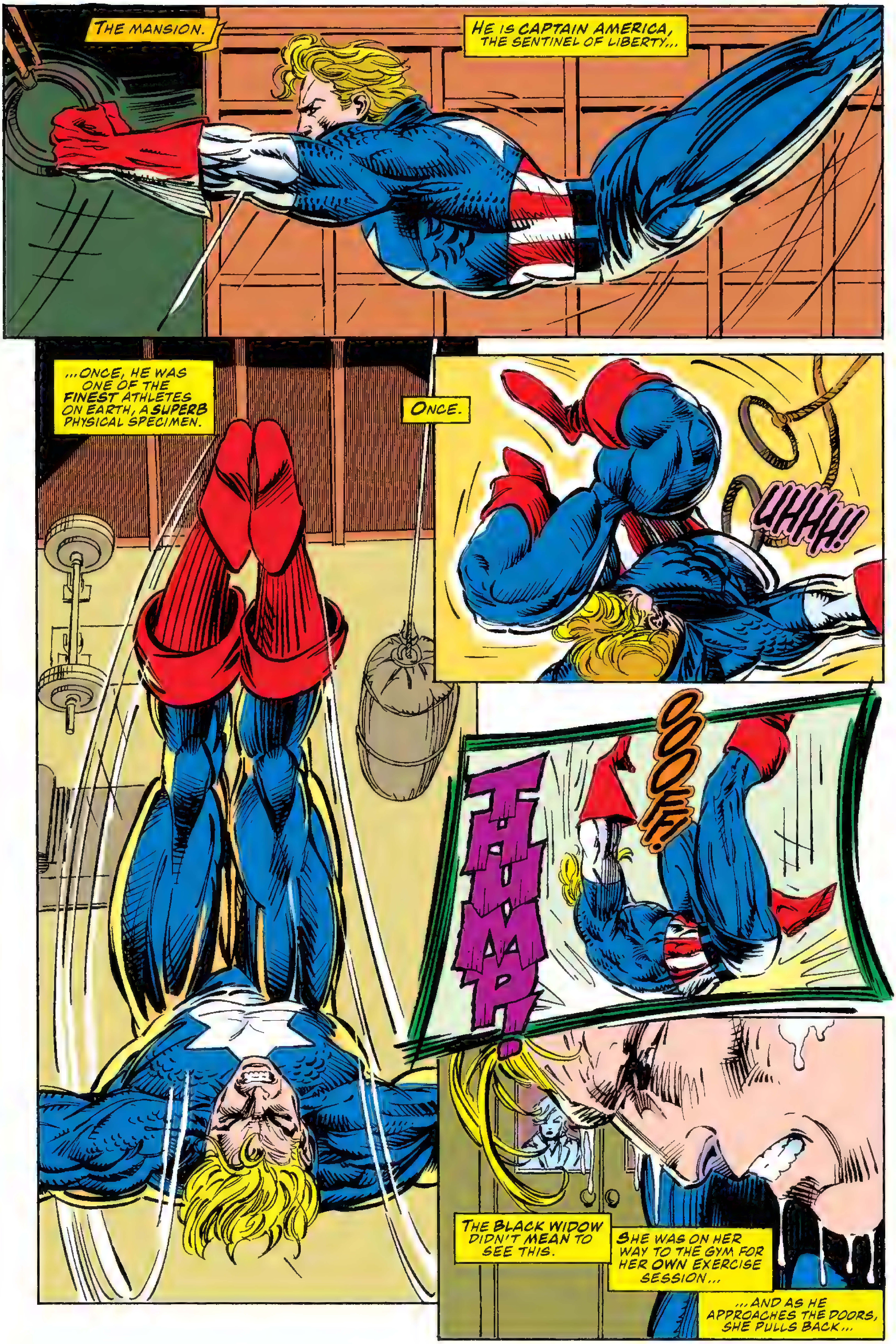

NEW YORK CITY...
...WHERE THE PRINCE OF POWER, THE AVENGER CALLED HERCULES, FINDS HIMSELF IGNORING MONITOR DUTY...
...FOR A MATTER, TO HIM, FAR MORE IMPORTANT.
I TELL THEE, TAYLOR MADISON--
--ALTHOUGH I HAVE RESPECTED THY WISHES AND NOT SEEN THEE IN WEEKS, MY THOUGHTS--AND YEA, MY VERY HEART--ARE EVER WITH THEE.
HERCULES, I--I KNOW. I FEEL THE SAME WAY.
BUT I CAN'T GET INVOLVED NOW. IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO YOU.
PLEASE TRY AND UNDERSTAND.
DING DONG
PLEASE...
CLIK!
YOU MUST BE THE WOMAN WHO ANSWERED MY AD--
--AUGUSTINE JONES?
THAT'S RIGHT. A VERY TIRED WOMAN LOOKING FOR A DECENT PLACE TO LIVE IN NEW YORK.
PERFECT... BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN LOOKING FOR A ROOMMATE TO HELP WITH THE RENT.
COME ON IN -- PLEASE EXCUSE THE MESS.
RIINNG!
THE PHONE--!
EXCUSE ME AGAIN, AUGUSTINE. JUST MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.
OH, I INTEND TO, TAYLOR.
I INTEND TO.

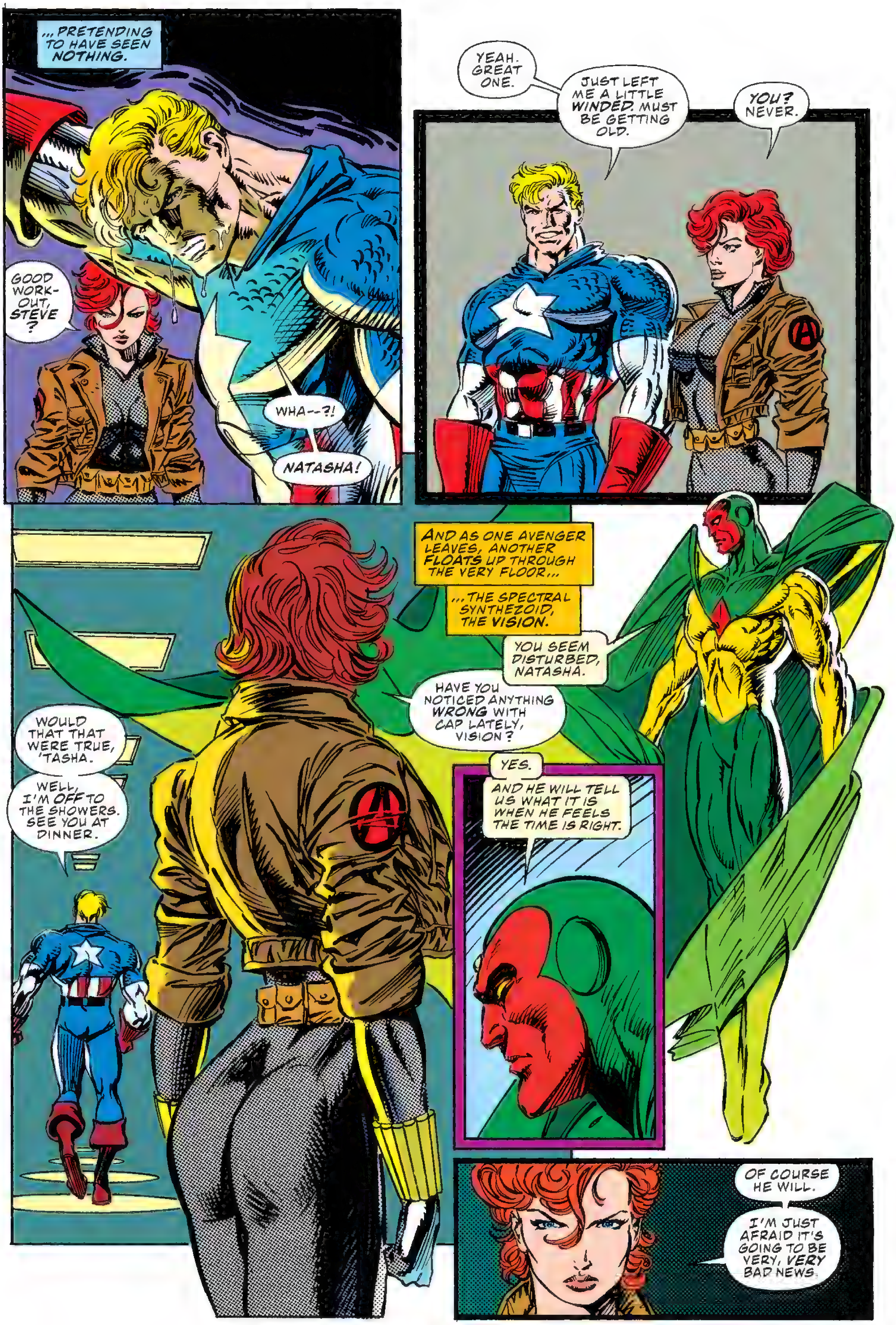
WUNDAGORE.
WHOOOSH!
CRYSTAL, I STILL WISH YOU HADN'T *INSISTED* ON COMING--
--WE KNOW VERY *LITTLE* ABOUT THE EVOLUTIONARY. THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT COULD HAPPEN AT THE SUMMIT.
WHICH IS *PRECISELY* WHY I'M HERE, PIETRO.
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOU *MAY* NEED MY HELP.
I KNOW.
AND I THANK--
--YOU?!
SWEET HEAVEN--
--WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?!
SKREEE

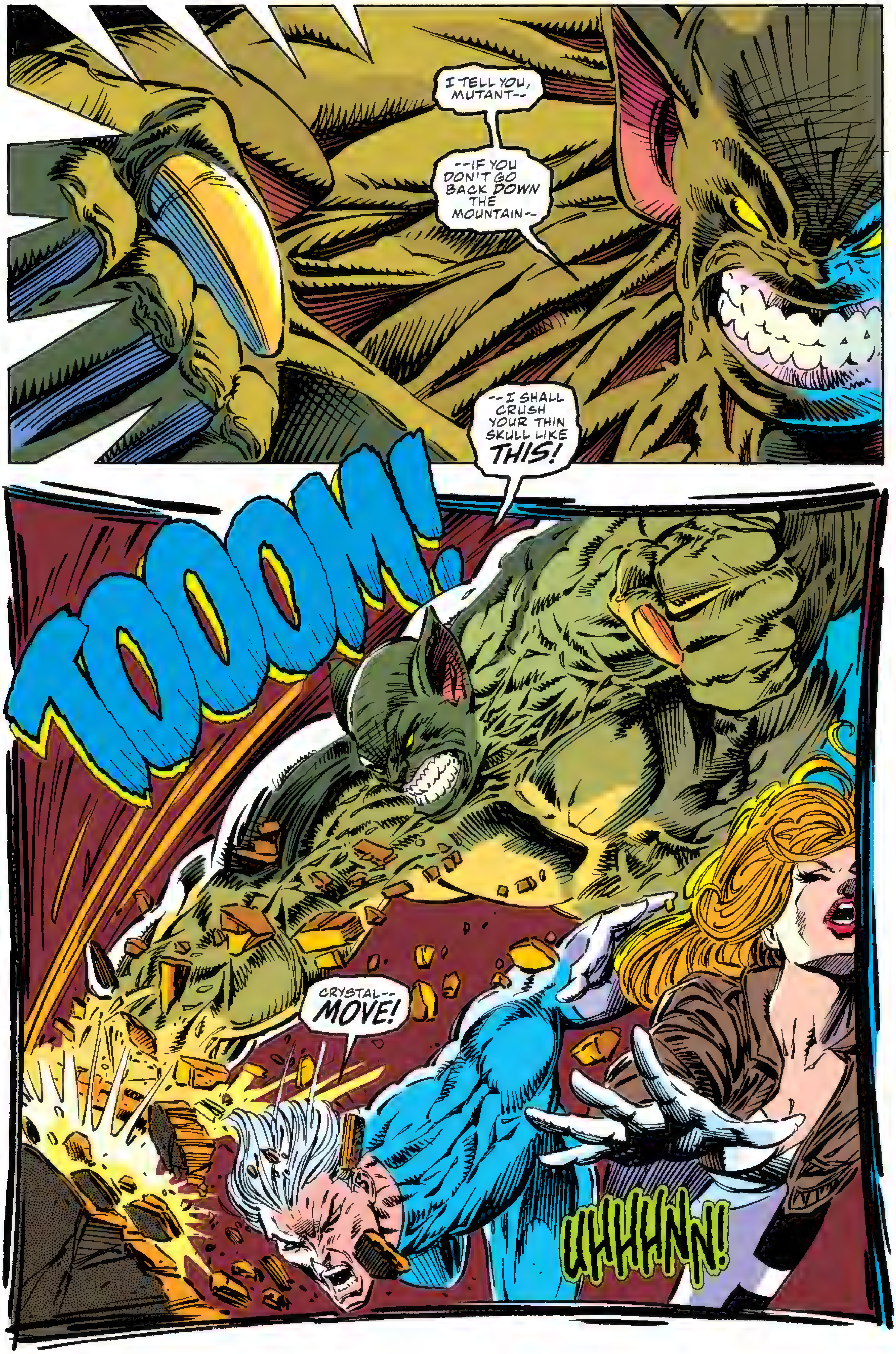

IT IS A SHRINE, MAGNUSSON--
--TO THE PLACE WHERE YOUR MOTHER, MAGDA WAS LAST SEEN ALIVE. IT IS A SACRED SPOT.
I WAS.
BUT I DOUBTED THE WAYS OF MY PEERS, AND FOR THAT HERESY WAS CAST OUT OF AVALON.*
*SEE UNCANNY X-MEN #316.--RALF
YOU SEE, MAGNUSSON, I HAD BEGUN TO BELIEVE THAT YOUR FATHER MAGNETO'S WAY WAS PERHAPS NOT THE ONLY PATH FOR MUTANTS LIKE US.
THAT UNIFORM--!
YOU ARE AN ACOLYTE!
YOU SAID THIS WAS A SACRED PLACE. WERE THOSE CANDLES LEFT BY OTHER ACOLYTES?
THEY WERE--FOR THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PLACE IN MAGNUS'S LIFE, WHERE WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE BOTH LOST TO HIM.
BUT NONE OF THE ACOLYTES COME HERE ANYMORE.
NOT SINCE THE EVOLUTIONARY RETURNED. HE SUFFERS NO ONE ON HIS MOUNTAIN.

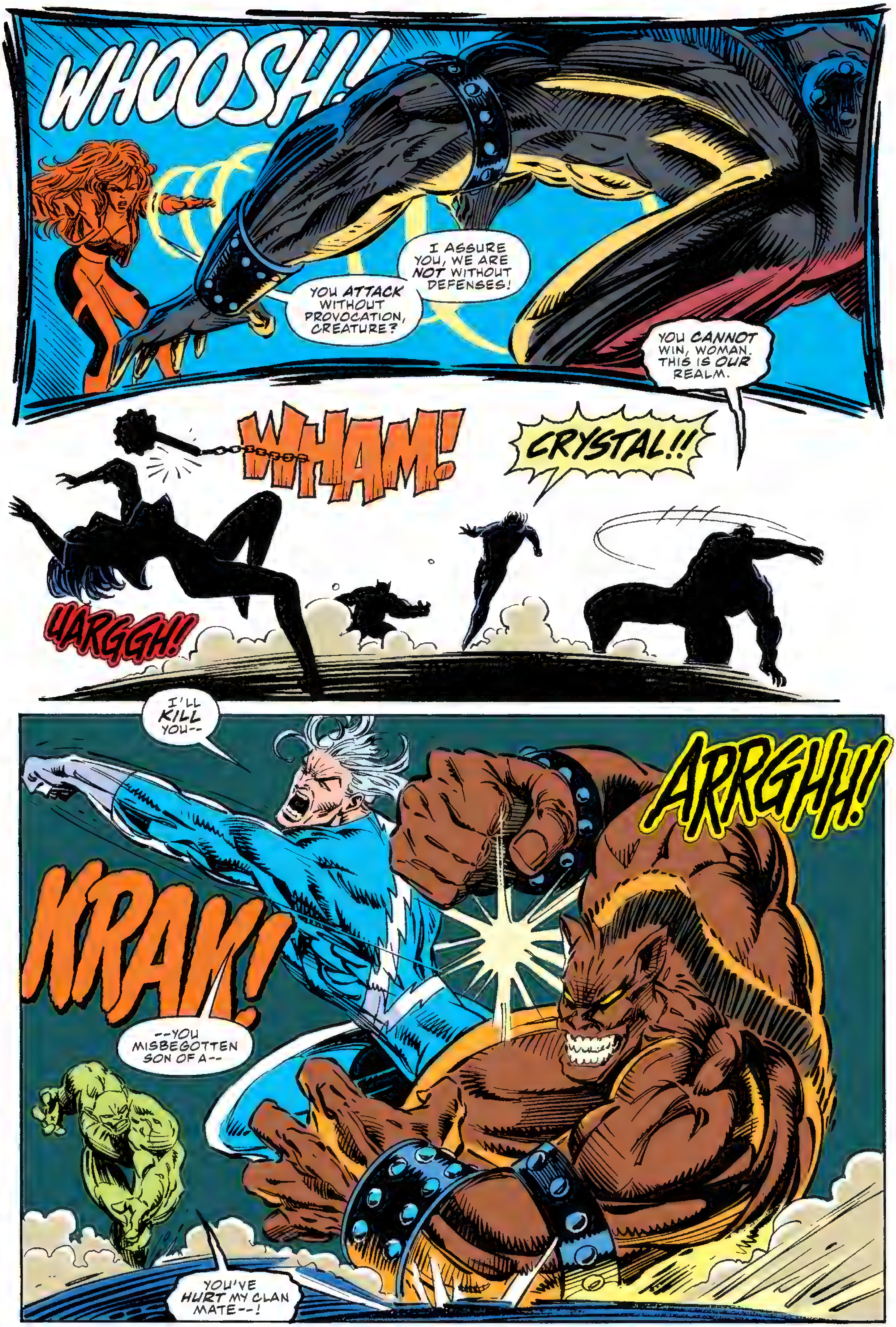

THEN EXODUS *FEARS* SOMETHING. INTERESTING.
I KNOW OF YOU FROM *CHARLES XAVIER*, BOY.
IF YOU NEED A HOME, YOU'LL FIND ONE WITH HIM. AFTER WE ARE DONE HERE, MY WIFE AND I CAN TAKE YOU THERE.
PERHAPS ONE DAY. BUT I AM NOT READY FOR THAT JUST YET.
BUT YOU SHOULD *NOT* BE ON THIS MOUNTAIN, SIR. IT IS A DANGEROUS PLACE FOR PEOPLE LIKE US--
--PEOPLE CONNECTED TO YOUR FATHER.
WHY, BOY? *WHY?*
FSWWWH!
PIETRO!
ANOTHER FLARE! MORE *INTENSE* THAN THE OTHERS--!
AND THE BOY-- *GONE?!*
HE WAS *WISE*, INTRUDER.
SWEET AGON--!


FOR *NONE* MAY STAND UPON OUR MOUNTAIN!
*NEW MEN!**
WE MEAN *NO* HARM. WE ONLY SEEK AUDIENCE WITH THE *EVOLUTIONARY* TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A *FRIEND*-- ONE OF THE *FIRST* OF HIS CREATIONS!
WE *KNOW* YOU, AVENGER. KNOW *THIS*-- TAKE ONE STEP FURTHER, AND WE WILL *KILL* YOU BOTH!
*ACTUALLY, THEY'RE ANIMUTANTS. SEE CURRENT ISSUES OF THOR FOR THE FULL SCOOP. --ANIRALPH

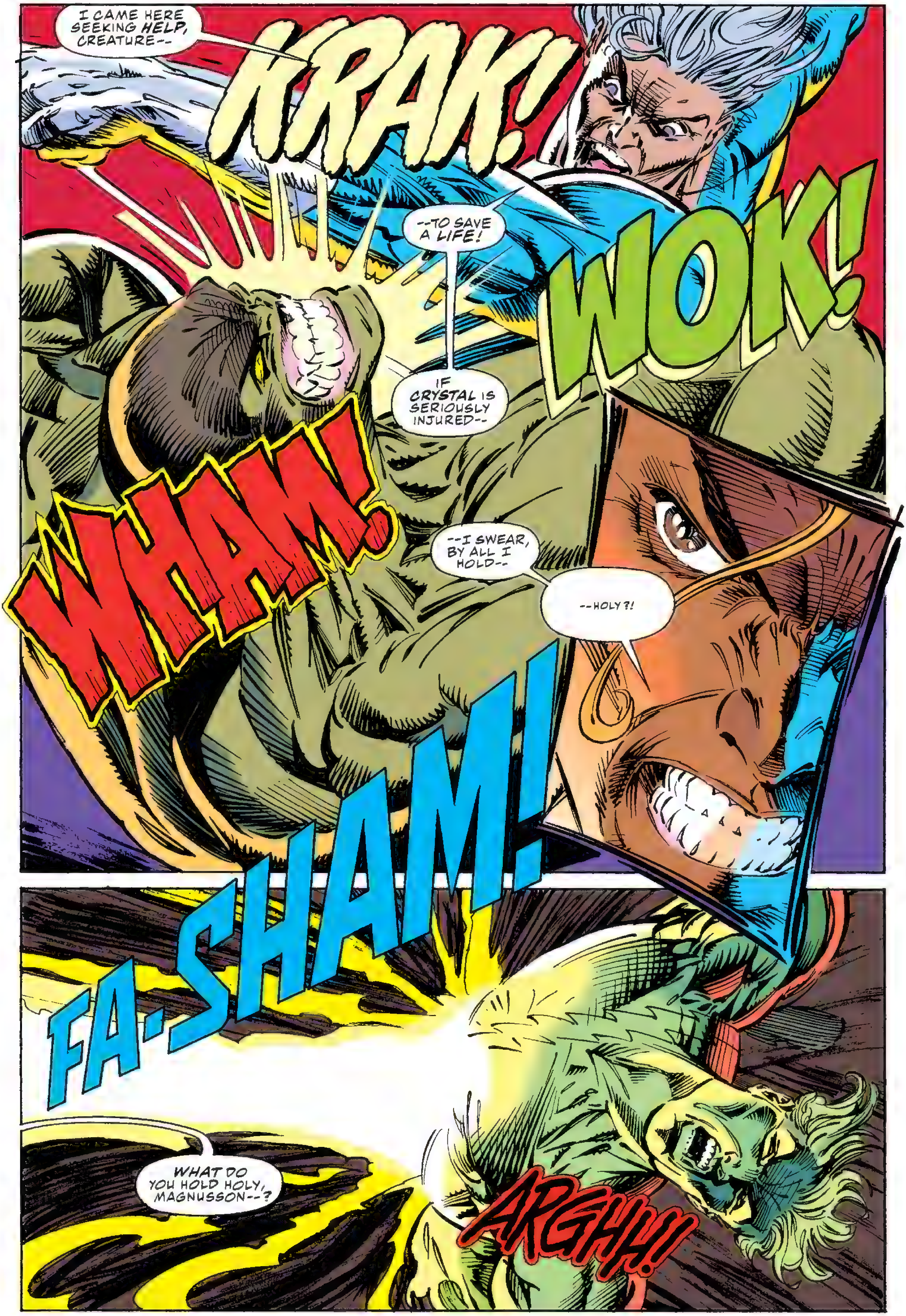

THE MANSION.
HE IS CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE SENTINEL OF LIBERTY...
...ONCE, HE WAS ONE OF THE FINEST ATHLETES ON EARTH, A SUPERB PHYSICAL SPECIMEN.
ONCE.
UHHH!
OOOF!
THUMP!
THE BLACK WIDOW DIDN'T MEAN TO SEE THIS.
SHE WAS ON HER WAY TO THE GYM FOR HER OWN EXERCISE SESSION...
...AND AS HE APPROACHES THE DOORS, SHE PULLS BACK...

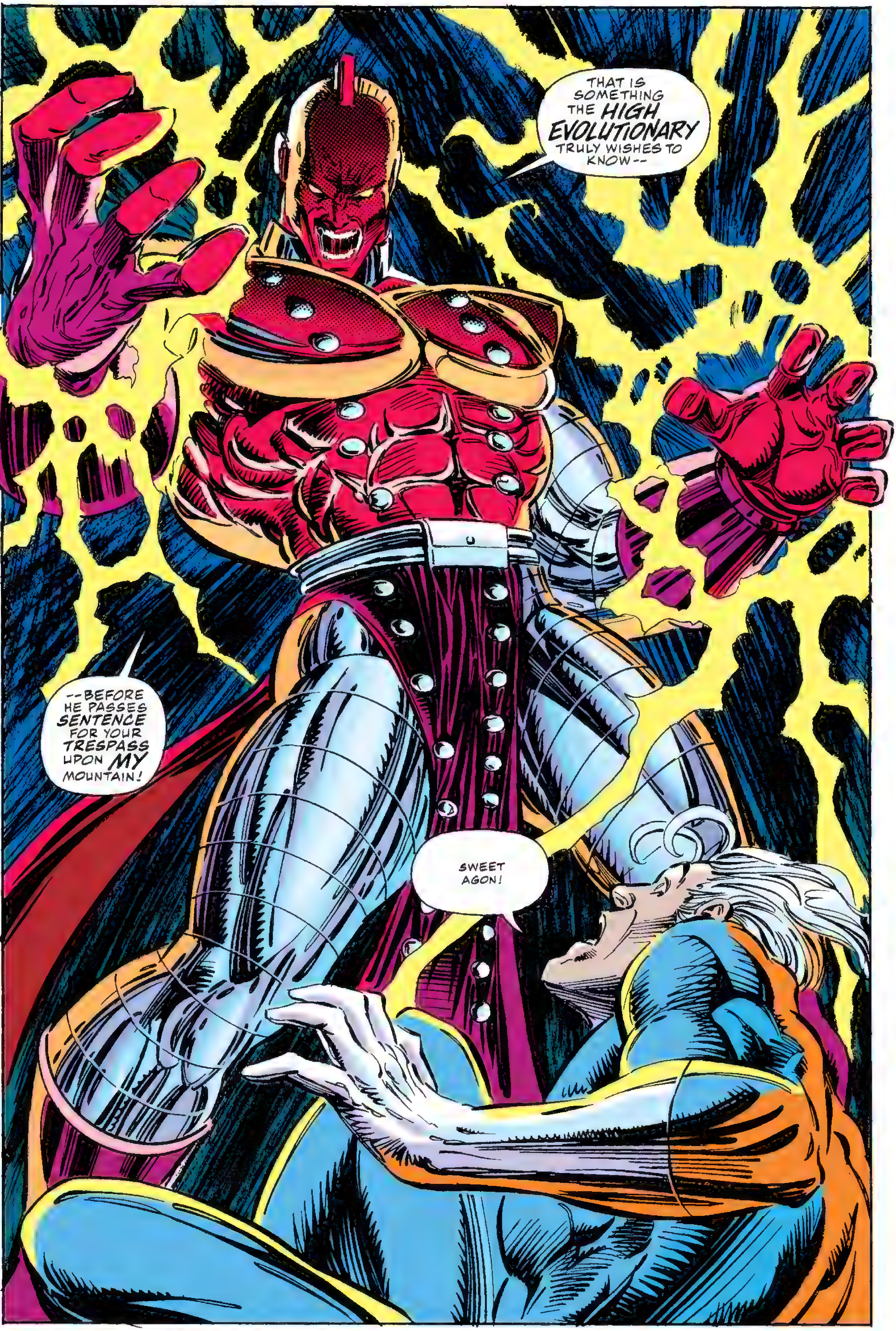

...PRETENDING TO HAVE SEEN NOTHING.
GOOD WORK-OUT, STEVE?
WHA--?!
NATASHA!
YEAH. GREAT ONE.
JUST LEFT ME A LITTLE WINDED. MUST BE GETTING OLD.
YOU? NEVER.
WOULD THAT THAT WERE TRUE, 'TASHA.
WELL, I'M OFF TO THE SHOWERS. SEE YOU AT DINNER.
AND AS ONE AVENGER LEAVES, ANOTHER FLOATS UP THROUGH THE VERY FLOOR...
...THE SPECTRAL SYNTHEZOID, THE VISION.
YOU SEEM DISTURBED, NATASHA.
HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING WRONG WITH CAP LATELY, VISION?
YES.
AND HE WILL TELL US WHAT IT IS WHEN HE FEELS THE TIME IS RIGHT.
OF COURSE HE WILL.
I'M JUST AFRAID IT'S GOING TO BE VERY, VERY BAD NEWS.

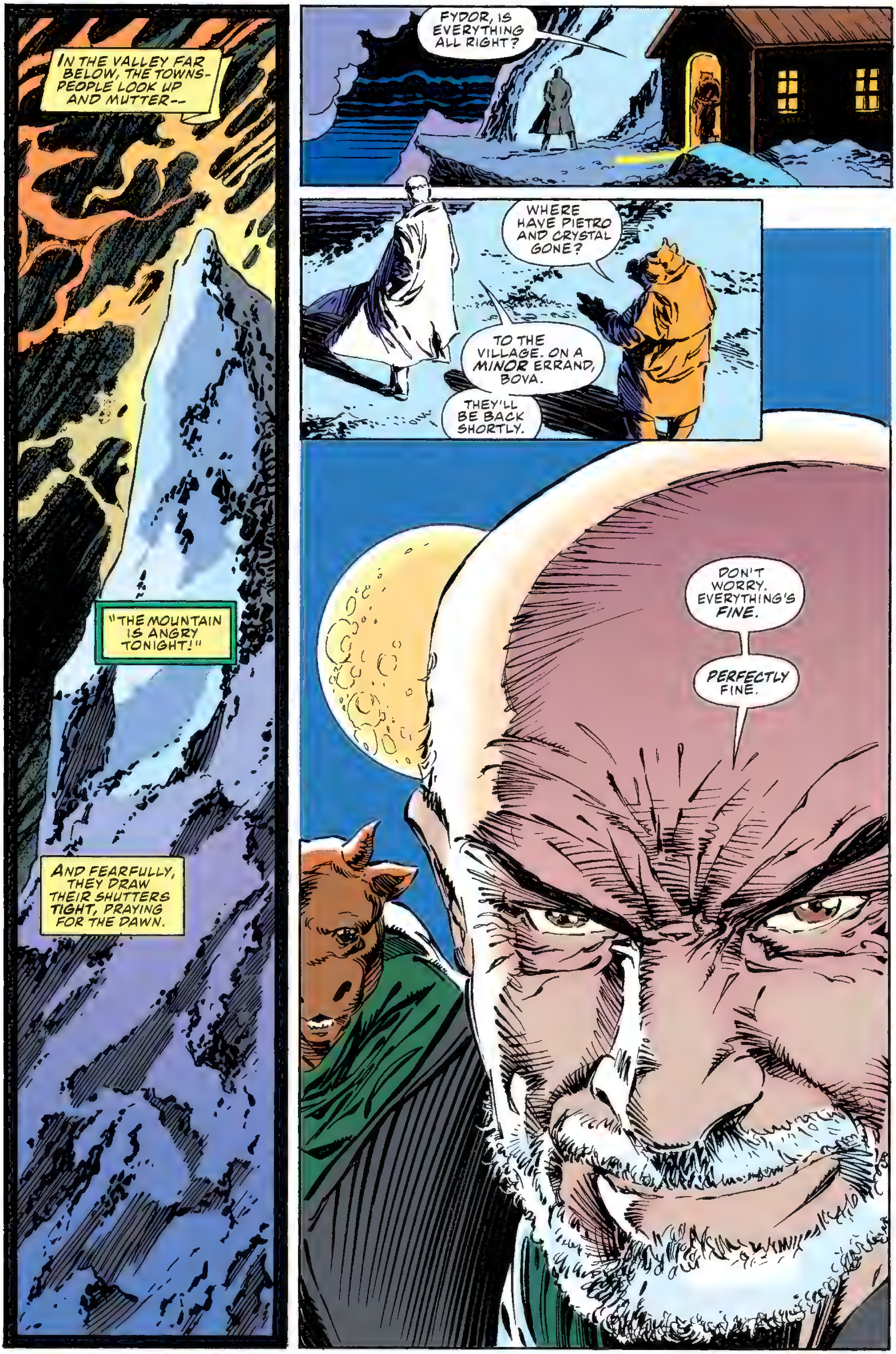

I TELL YOU, MUTANT--
--IF YOU DON'T GO BACK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN--
--I SHALL CRUSH YOUR THIN SKULL LIKE *THIS!*
TOOOM!
CRYSTAL-- *MOVE!*
UHHHNN!

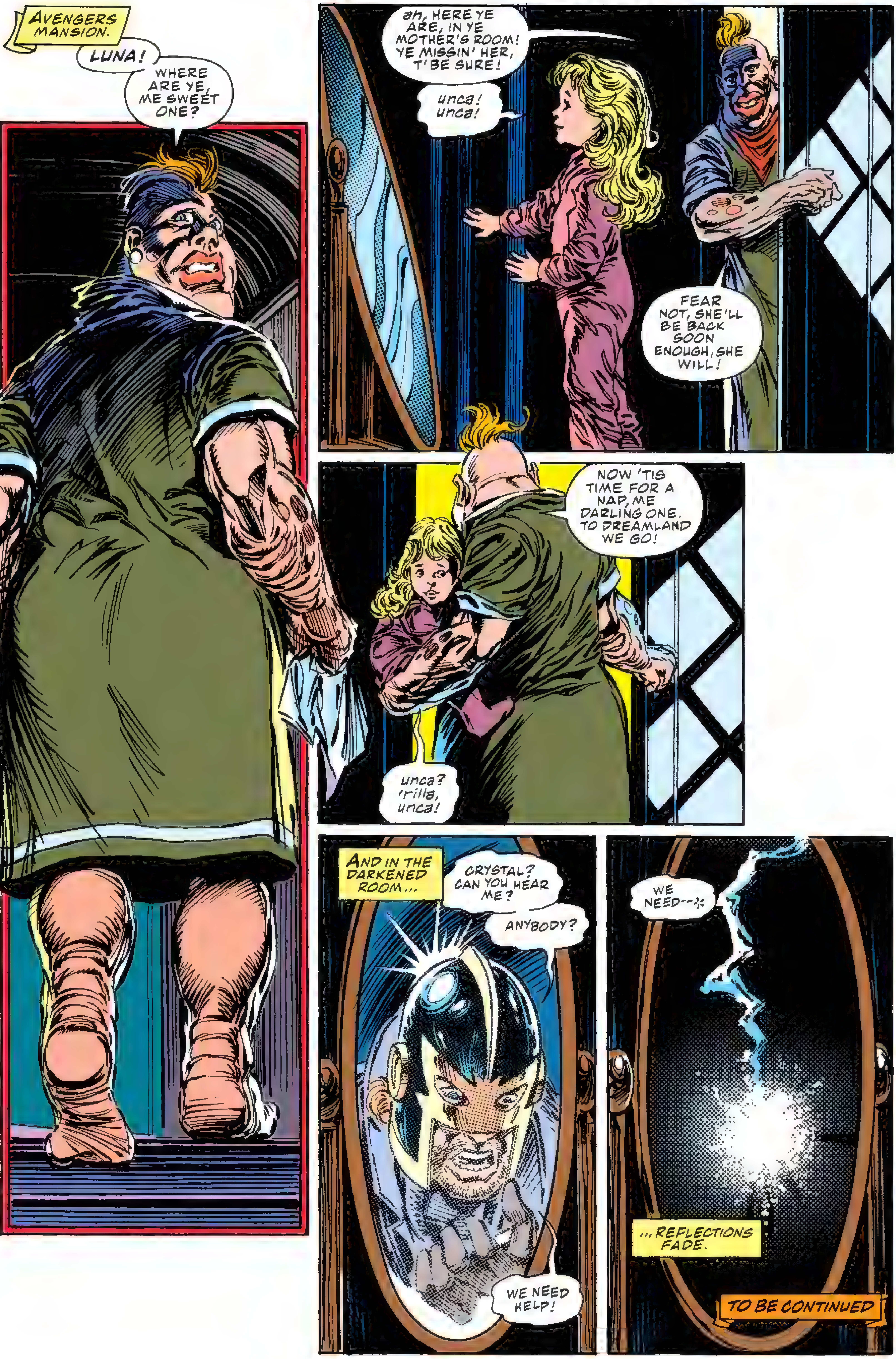

WHOOSH!!
YOU ATTACK WITHOUT PROVOCATION, CREATURE?
I ASSURE YOU, WE ARE NOT WITHOUT DEFENSES!
YOU CANNOT WIN, WOMAN. THIS IS OUR REALM.
WHAM!
CRYSTAL!!
UARGGH!
I'LL KILL YOU--
ARRGHH!
KRAK!
--YOU MISBEGOTTEN SON OF A--
YOU'VE HURT MY CLAN MATE--!

--I'LL TEAR YOU APART FOR THAT, MUTANT!
OH--
--SHUTTUP.
THWOOM!

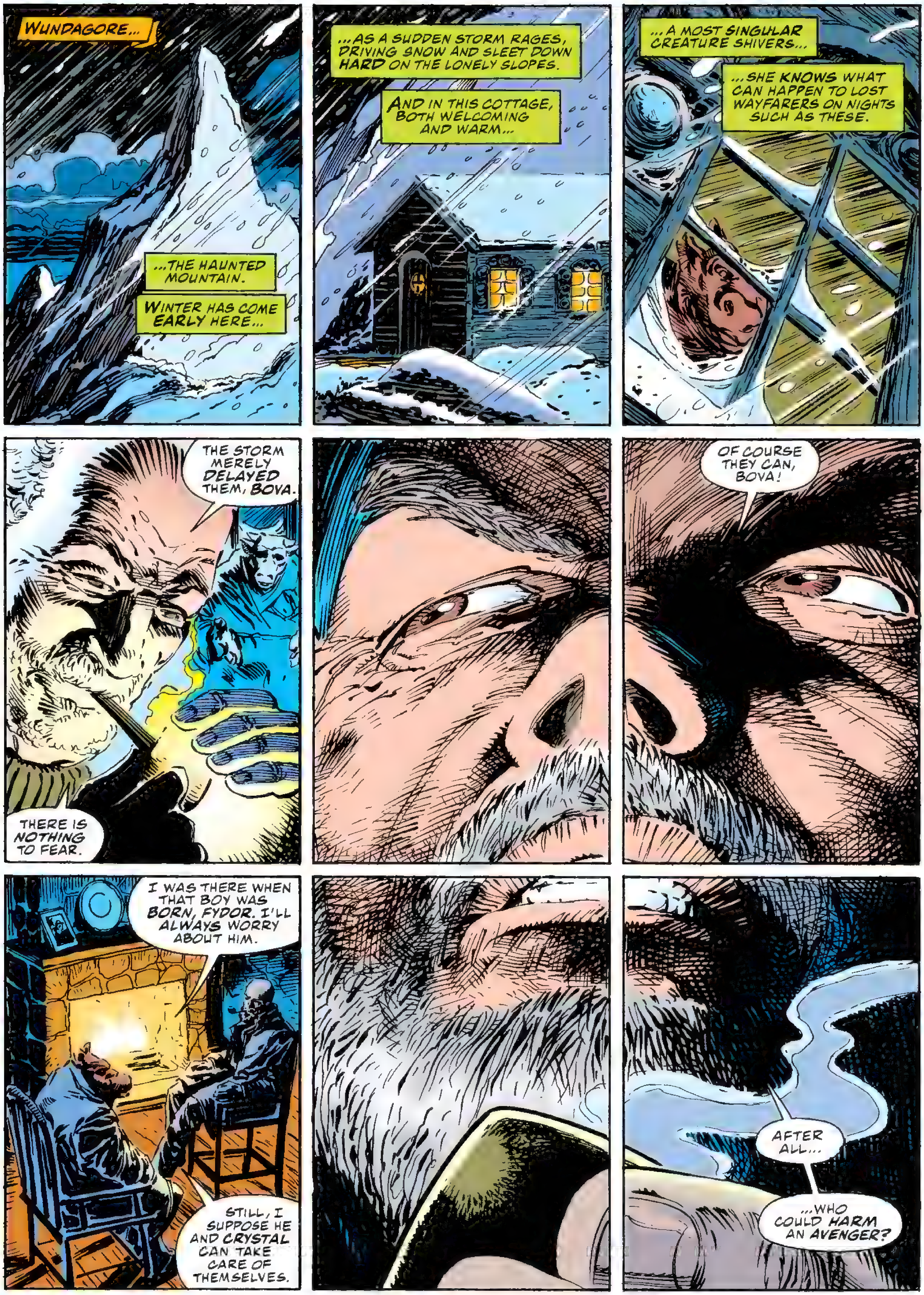

I CAME HERE SEEKING *HELP*, CREATURE--
KRAK!
--TO SAVE A *LIFE!*
WOK!
IF *CRYSTAL* IS SERIOUSLY INJURED--
WHAM!
--I SWEAR, BY ALL I HOLD--
--HOLY?!
FA-SHAM!
WHAT DO YOU HOLD HOLY, MAGNUSSON--?
ARGHH!!

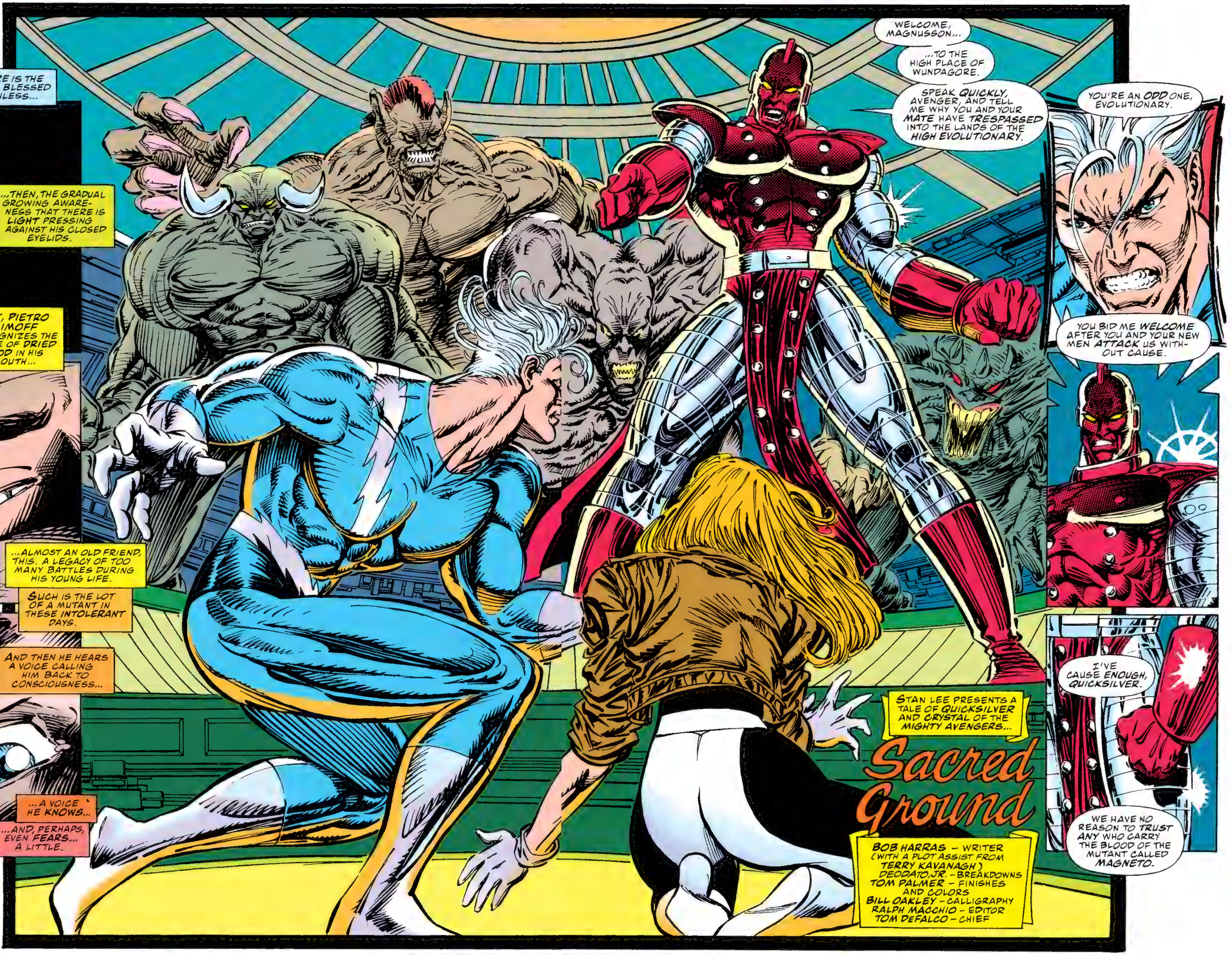

THAT IS SOMETHING THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY TRULY WISHES TO KNOW--
--BEFORE HE PASSES SENTENCE FOR YOUR TRESPASS UPON MY MOUNTAIN!
SWEET AGON!


IN THE VALLEY FAR BELOW, THE TOWNSPEOPLE LOOK UP AND MUTTER--
"THE MOUNTAIN IS ANGRY TONIGHT!"
AND FEARFULLY, THEY DRAW THEIR SHUTTERS TIGHT, PRAYING FOR THE DAWN.
FYDOR, IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
WHERE HAVE PIETRO AND CRYSTAL GONE?
TO THE VILLAGE. ON A *MINOR* ERRAND, BOVA.
THEY'LL BE BACK SHORTLY.
DON'T WORRY. EVERYTHING'S *FINE*.
PERFECTLY FINE.

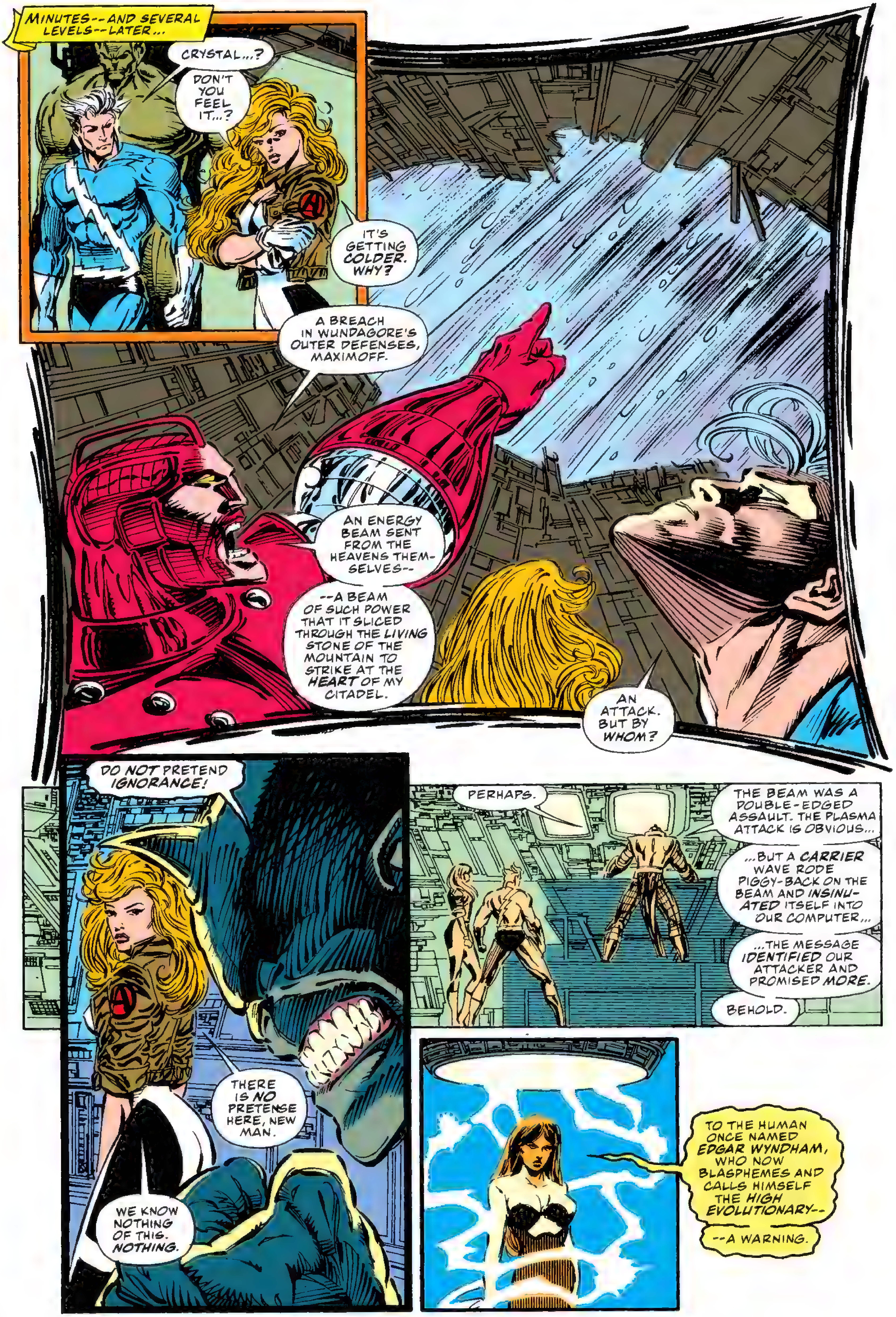

AVENGERS MANSION.
LUNA!
WHERE ARE YE, ME SWEET ONE?
ah, HERE YE ARE, IN YE MOTHER'S ROOM! YE MISSIN' HER, T' BE SURE!
unca! unca!
FEAR NOT, SHE'LL BE BACK SOON ENOUGH, SHE WILL!
NOW 'TIS TIME FOR A NAP, ME DARLING ONE. TO DREAMLAND WE GO!
unca? 'rilla, unca!
AND IN THE DARKENED ROOM...
CRYSTAL? CAN YOU HEAR ME?
ANYBODY?
WE NEED HELP!
WE NEED--
...REFLECTIONS FADE.
TO BE CONTINUED

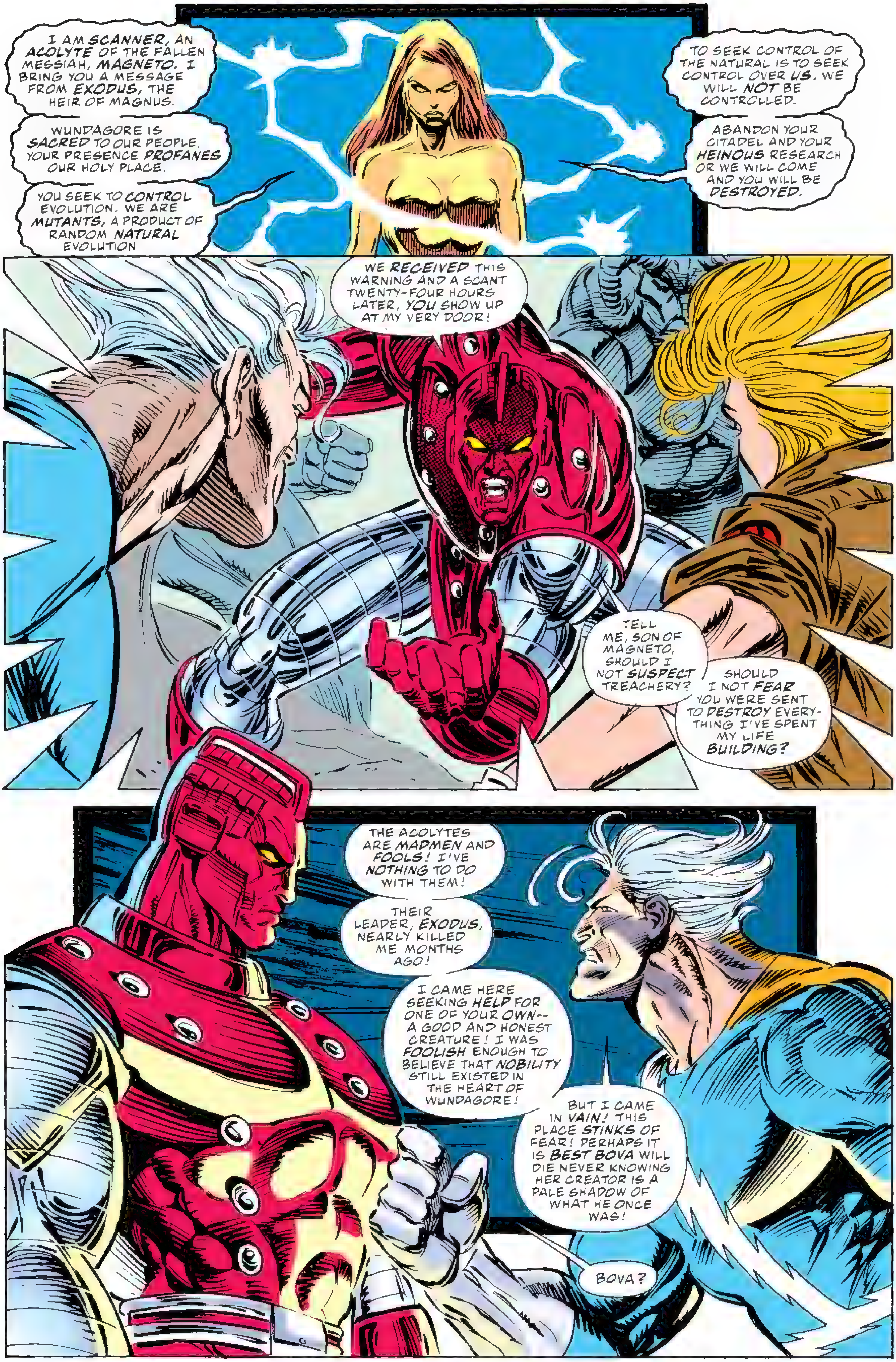
MARVEL COMICS
381
DEC '94
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
PALMER
and the heavens
OPENED...


WUNDAGORE...
...THE HAUNTED MOUNTAIN.
WINTER HAS COME EARLY HERE...
...AS A SUDDEN STORM RAGES, DRIVING SNOW AND SLEET DOWN HARD ON THE LONELY SLOPES.
AND IN THIS COTTAGE, BOTH WELCOMING AND WARM...
...A MOST SINGULAR CREATURE SHIVERS...
...SHE KNOWS WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO LOST WAYFARERS ON NIGHTS SUCH AS THESE.
THE STORM MERELY DELAYED THEM, BOVA.
THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR.
OF COURSE THEY CAN, BOVA!
I WAS THERE WHEN THAT BOY WAS BORN, FYDOR. I'LL ALWAYS WORRY ABOUT HIM.
STILL, I SUPPOSE HE AND CRYSTAL CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.
AFTER ALL...
...WHO COULD HARM AN AVENGER?

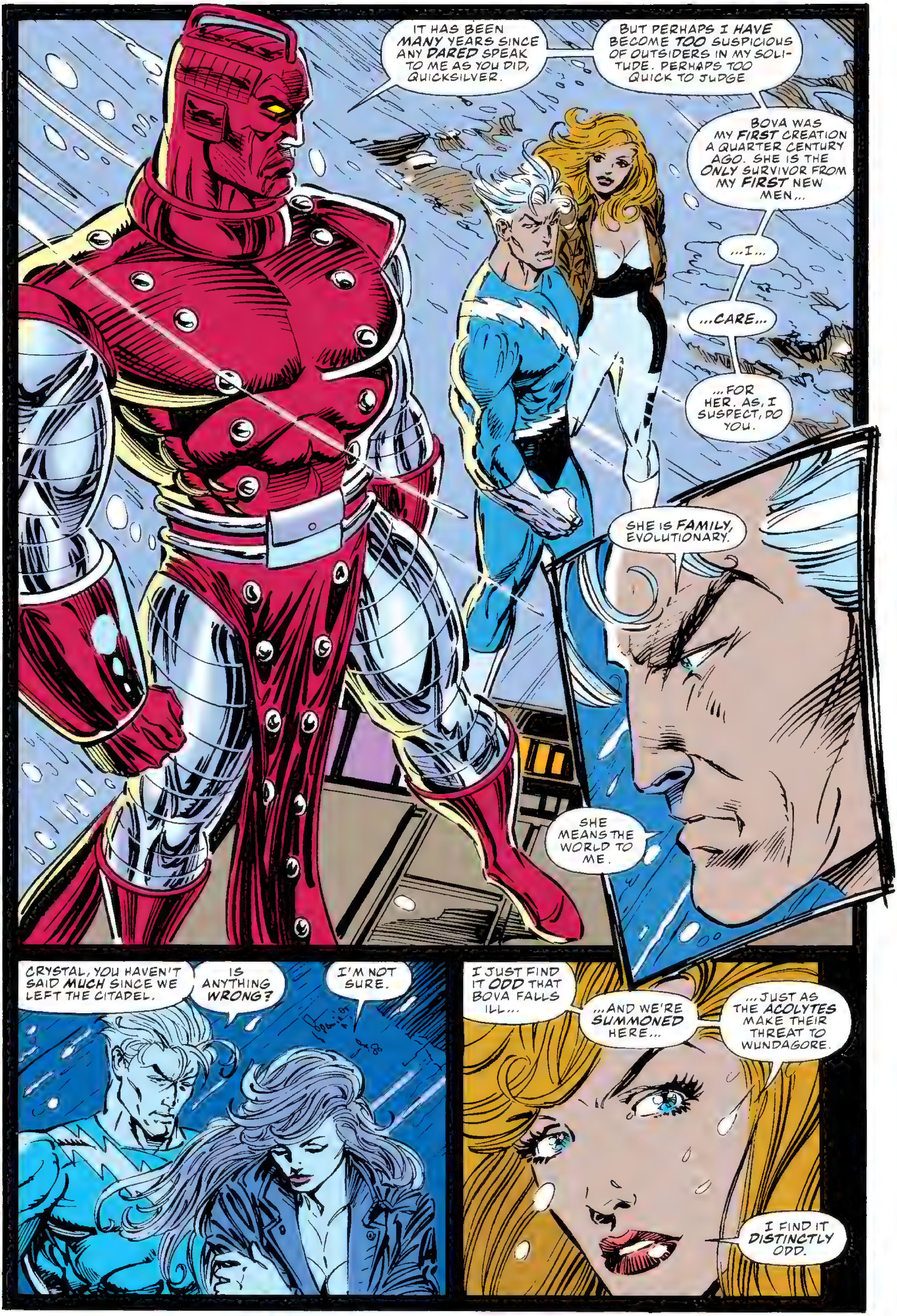

FIRST, THERE IS THE DARKNESS, BLESSED AND PAINLESS...
...THEN, THE GRADUAL GROWING AWARENESS THAT THERE IS LIGHT PRESSING AGAINST HIS CLOSED EYELIDS.
NEXT, PIETRO MAXIMOFF RECOGNIZES THE TASTE OF DRIED BLOOD IN HIS MOUTH...
...ALMOST AN OLD FRIEND, THIS. A LEGACY OF TOO MANY BATTLES DURING HIS YOUNG LIFE.
SUCH IS THE LOT OF A MUTANT IN THESE INTOLERANT DAYS.
AND THEN HE HEARS A VOICE CALLING HIM BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS...
...A VOICE HE KNOWS...
...AND, PERHAPS, EVEN FEARS... A LITTLE.
WELCOME, MAGNUSSON...
...TO THE HIGH PLACE OF WUNDAGORE.
SPEAK QUICKLY, AVENGER, AND TELL ME WHY YOU AND YOUR MATE HAVE TRESPASSED INTO THE LANDS OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
YOU'RE AN ODD ONE, EVOLUTIONARY.
YOU BID ME WELCOME AFTER YOU AND YOUR NEW MEN ATTACK US WITHOUT CAUSE.
I'VE CAUSE ENOUGH, QUICKSILVER.
WE HAVE NO REASON TO TRUST ANY WHO CARRY THE BLOOD OF THE MUTANT CALLED MAGNETO.
STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF QUICKSILVER AND CRYSTAL OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS...
Sacred Ground
BOB HARRAS - WRITER
(WITH A PLOT ASSIST FROM TERRY KAVANAGH)
DEODATO, JR. - BREAKDOWNS
TOM PALMER - FINISHES AND COLORS
BILL OAKLEY - CALLIGRAPHY
RALPH MACCHIO - EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO - CHIEF

YOU, OF ALL MEN, SHOULD KNOW THAT MY PATERNITY HAS NO BEARING ON WHO AND WHAT I AM!
MY MOTHER DIED ON THIS MOUNTAIN TRYING TO ESCAPE MY FATHER'S MADNESS! YOU KNOW THAT-- YOU WERE THERE!
SPEAK THAT WAY AGAIN TO THE EVOLUTIONARY, BOY--
--AND, I SWEAR, I'LL GUT THEE!
A WARNING, NEW MAN--
--MAKE ONE MOVE AGAINST MY HUSBAND, AND I SWEAR YOU'LL BE DEAD BEFORE YOU CAN TAKE YOUR NEXT BREATH.
CRYSTAL--!
I CAN HANDLE THIS! THERE'S NO NEED TO ENDANGER YOURSELF!
FASCINATING.
THE BONDING OF A MATED PAIR.
I SEE NO NEED FOR ANY FURTHER VIOLENCE THIS NIGHT...
...BUT IF YOU WISH TO SEE WHY I FIND YOUR SUDDEN APPEARANCE SUSPECT...
...FOLLOW ME.


MINUTES--AND SEVERAL LEVELS--LATER...
CRYSTAL...?
DON'T YOU FEEL IT...?
IT'S GETTING COLDER. WHY?
A BREACH IN WUNDAGORE'S OUTER DEFENSES, MAXIMOFF.
AN ENERGY BEAM SENT FROM THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES--
--A BEAM OF SUCH POWER THAT IT SLICED THROUGH THE LIVING STONE OF THE MOUNTAIN TO STRIKE AT THE HEART OF MY CITADEL.
AN ATTACK. BUT BY WHOM?
DO NOT PRETEND IGNORANCE!
THERE IS NO PRETENSE HERE, NEW MAN.
WE KNOW NOTHING OF THIS. NOTHING.
PERHAPS.
THE BEAM WAS A DOUBLE-EDGED ASSAULT. THE PLASMA ATTACK IS OBVIOUS...
...BUT A CARRIER WAVE RODE PIGGY-BACK ON THE BEAM AND INSINUATED ITSELF INTO OUR COMPUTER...
...THE MESSAGE IDENTIFIED OUR ATTACKER AND PROMISED MORE.
BEHOLD.
TO THE HUMAN ONCE NAMED EDGAR WYNDHAM, WHO NOW BLASPHEMES AND CALLS HIMSELF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY--
--A WARNING.

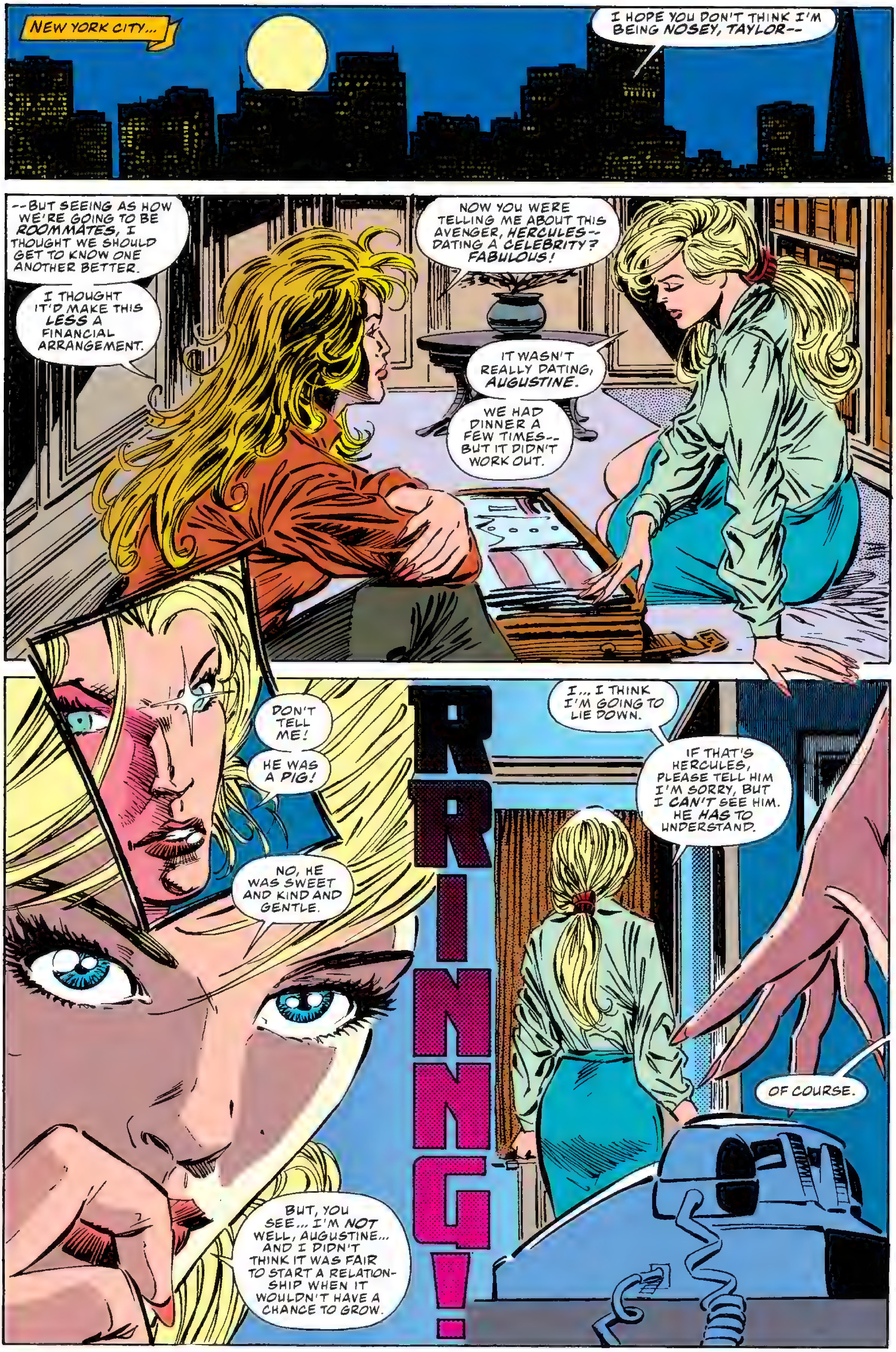

I AM **SCANNER**, AN **ACOLYTE** OF THE FALLEN MESSIAH, **MAGNETO**. I BRING YOU A MESSAGE FROM **EXODUS**, THE HEIR OF MAGNUS.
WUNDAGORE IS **SACRED** TO OUR PEOPLE. YOUR PRESENCE **PROFANES** OUR HOLY PLACE.
YOU SEEK TO **CONTROL** EVOLUTION. WE ARE **MUTANTS**, A PRODUCT OF RANDOM **NATURAL** EVOLUTION
TO SEEK CONTROL OF THE NATURAL IS TO SEEK CONTROL OVER **US**. WE WILL **NOT** BE CONTROLLED.
ABANDON YOUR CITADEL AND YOUR **HEINOUS** RESEARCH OR WE WILL COME AND YOU WILL BE **DESTROYED**.
WE **RECEIVED** THIS WARNING AND A SCANT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, **YOU** SHOW UP AT MY VERY DOOR!
TELL ME, SON OF MAGNETO, SHOULD I NOT **SUSPECT** TREACHERY?
SHOULD I NOT **FEAR** YOU WERE SENT TO **DESTROY** EVERYTHING I'VE SPENT MY LIFE **BUILDING?**
THE ACOLYTES ARE **MADMEN** AND **FOOLS!** I'VE **NOTHING** TO DO WITH THEM!
THEIR LEADER, **EXODUS**, NEARLY KILLED ME MONTHS AGO!
I CAME HERE SEEKING **HELP** FOR ONE OF YOUR **OWN**-- A GOOD AND HONEST CREATURE! I WAS **FOOLISH** ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT **NOBILITY** STILL EXISTED IN THE HEART OF WUNDAGORE!
BUT I CAME IN **VAIN!** THIS PLACE **STINKS** OF FEAR! PERHAPS IT IS **BEST BOVA** WILL DIE NEVER KNOWING HER CREATOR IS A PALE SHADOW OF WHAT HE ONCE WAS!
BOVA?

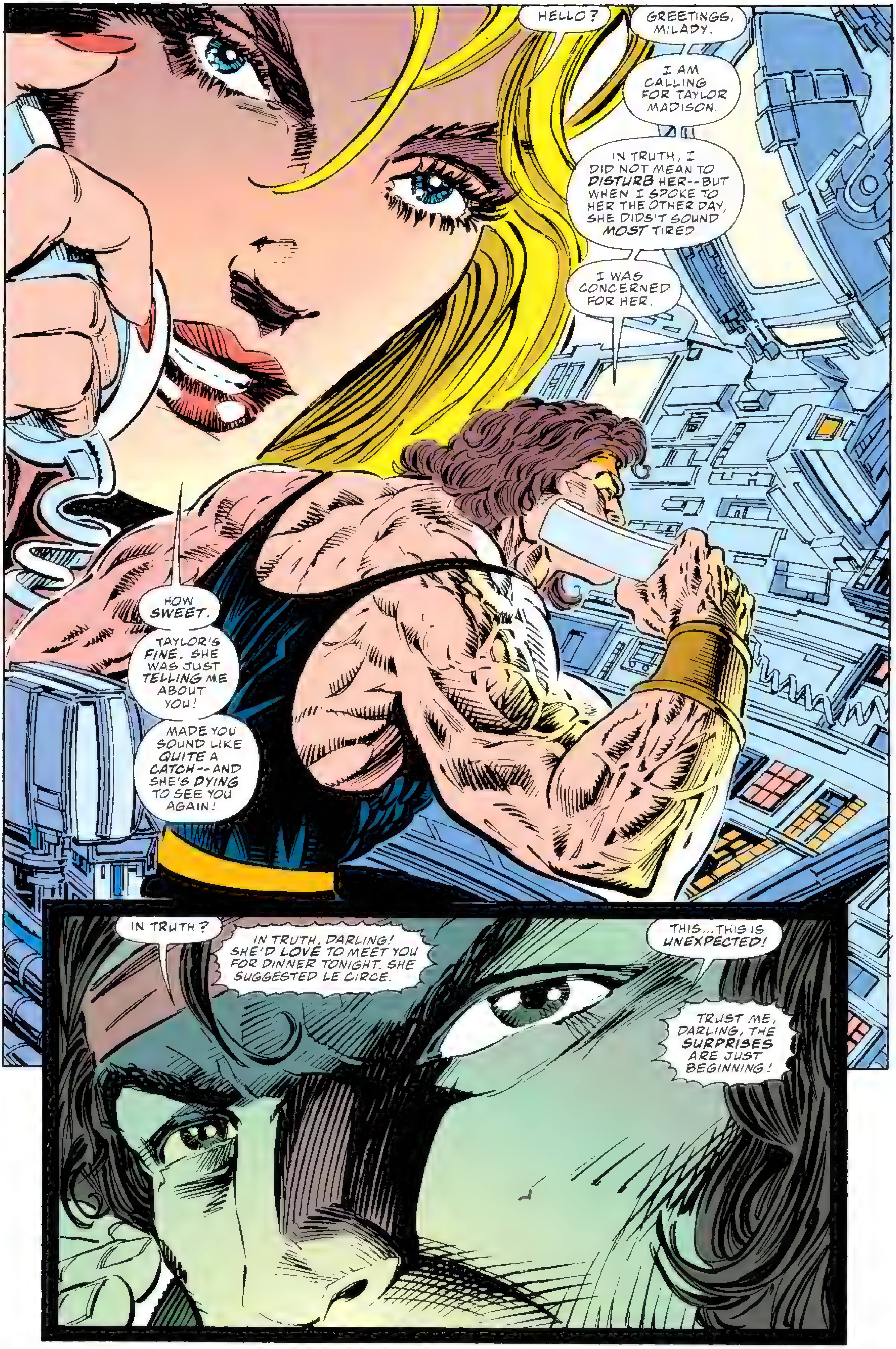
THE STORM IS RISING.
ICE CARRIED BY THE FEROCIOUS WIND CUTS THROUGH THE AIR LIKE STINGING NEEDLES...
...THAT CUT THROUGH COLD-NUMBED FLESH.
THE TEMPERATURE HAS BEEN DROPPING THROUGH THE NIGHT.
AND THE OLD, HUDDLED SAFELY IN THEIR HOMES, GATHERED 'ROUND THE GLOWING HEARTH, TELL THE YOUNG THE OLD TALES.
THE TALES THAT SAY SUCH STORMS AS THIS ARE PORTENTS OF THINGS BOTH GREAT AND TERRIBLE.
LITTLE DO THEY KNOW HOW RIGHT THOSE TALES ARE...
...FOR THIS NIGHT, THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY HAS COME OUT FROM HIS DEEP HOLD...
...AND WALKS THE WINDSWEPT HEIGHTS OF THE HAUNTED MOUNTAIN.
IT IS NOT FAR TO BOVA'S COTTAGE.
THERE MAY YET BE TIME.


IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE ANY DARED SPEAK TO ME AS YOU DID, QUICKSILVER.
BUT PERHAPS I HAVE BECOME TOO SUSPICIOUS OF OUTSIDERS IN MY SOLITUDE. PERHAPS TOO QUICK TO JUDGE
BOVA WAS MY FIRST CREATION A QUARTER CENTURY AGO. SHE IS THE ONLY SURVIVOR FROM MY FIRST NEW MEN...
...I...
...CARE...
...FOR HER. AS, I SUSPECT, DO YOU.
SHE IS FAMILY, EVOLUTIONARY.
SHE MEANS THE WORLD TO ME.
CRYSTAL, YOU HAVEN'T SAID MUCH SINCE WE LEFT THE CITADEL.
IS ANYTHING WRONG?
I'M NOT SURE.
I JUST FIND IT ODD THAT BOVA FALLS ILL...
...AND WE'RE SUMMONED HERE...
...JUST AS THE ACOLYTES MAKE THEIR THREAT TO WUNDAGORE.
I FIND IT DISTINCTLY ODD.

EMINENCE...
...BOVA'S HOME IS BELOW US.
I CATCH THE SCENT OF TWO BEINGS...
"...ONE OF OUR OWN KIND..."
"...AND ANOTHER."
YOU MUST EAT, BOVA.
HOW ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP UP YOUR STRENGTH?
I AM FEELING WEAKER, DEAR FYDOR.
WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU? YOU'VE CALMED MY FEARS OVER PIETRO AND CRYSTAL. YOU BABY ME SHAMELESSLY...
...AND I KNOW I'M NOT AN EASY PATIENT!
YOU'RE A DELIGHT, BOVA. NOW, HUSH--AND EAT SOME BROTH!
YOU'RE TOO GOOD TO ME, FYDOR!
YOU'RE A TRUE FRIEND, AND THEY'RE RARE ENOUGH IN THIS LIFE, BELIEVE YOU ME.
YOU'RE VERY IMPORTANT TO--
VMMMMM
--WHAT?!

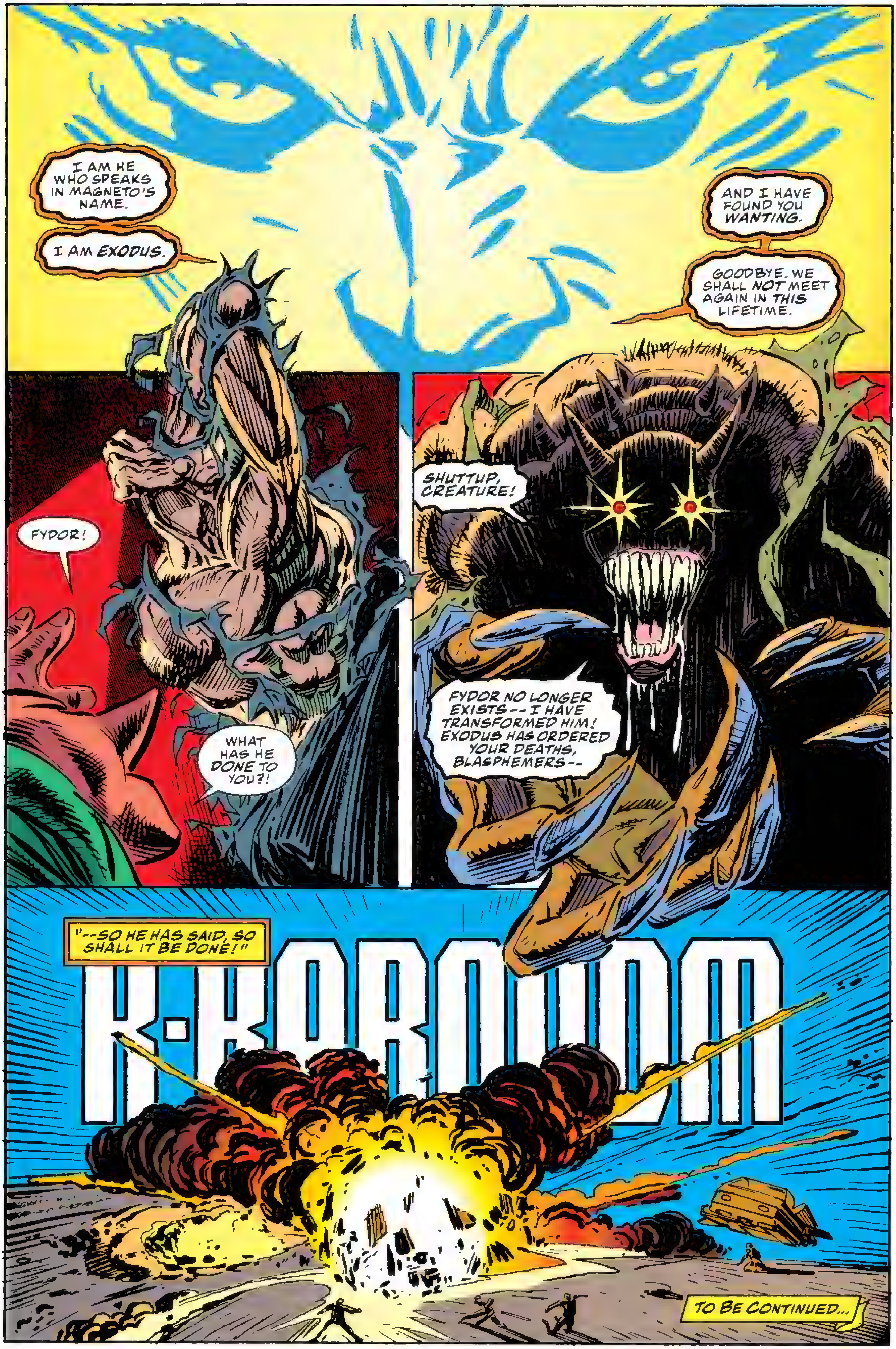
BOVA AYRSHIRE-- MY FIRST AND FINEST CREATION--
YOU HAVE CALLED AND I HAVE COME!
SWEET SAINTS!
THE EMINENCE-- IN MY HOUSE?!
I NEVER *DREAMED!* NEVER *HOPED!*

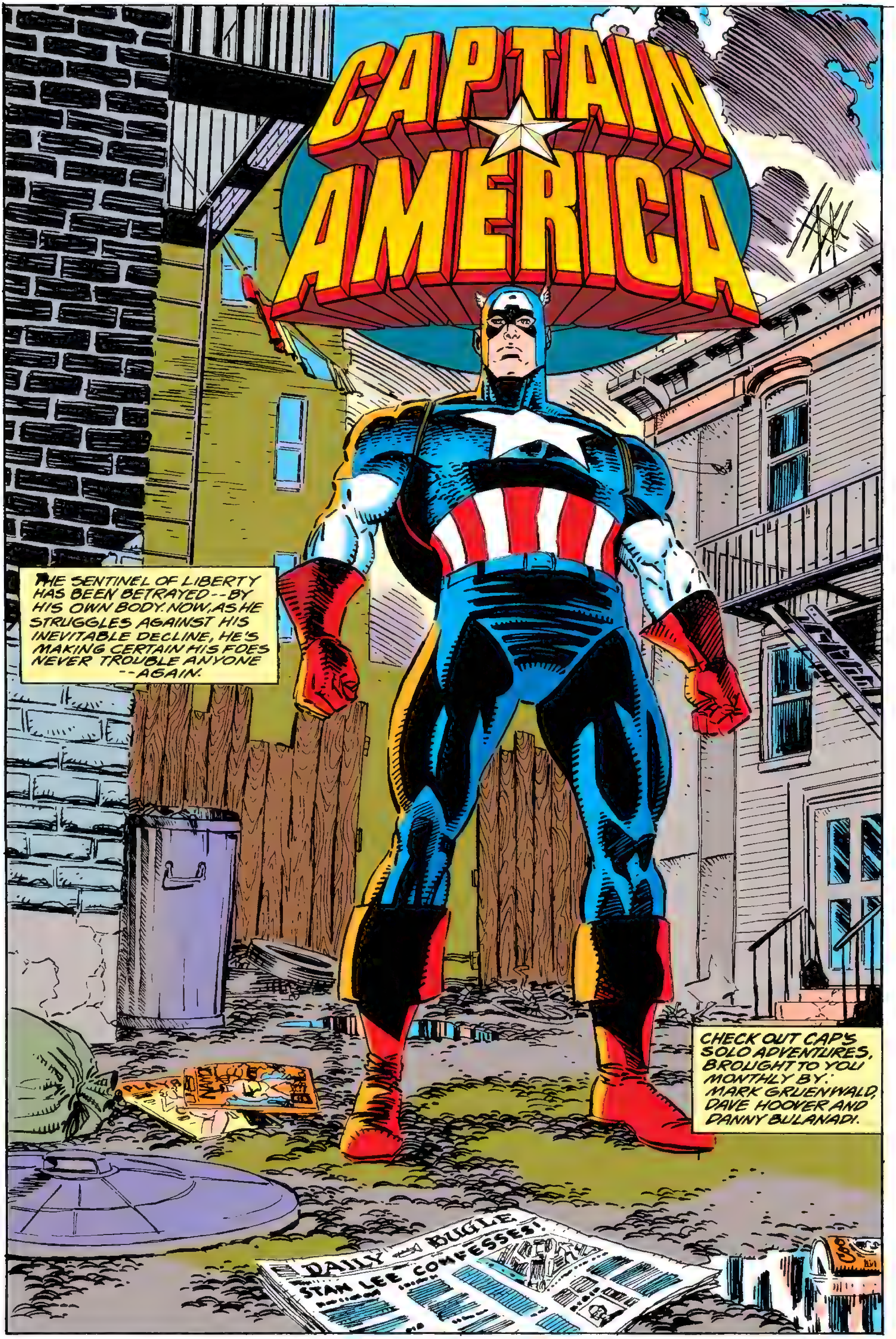

NEW YORK CITY...
I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I'M BEING *NOSEY*, TAYLOR--
--BUT SEEING AS HOW WE'RE GOING TO BE *ROOMMATES*, I THOUGHT WE SHOULD GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER BETTER.
I THOUGHT IT'D MAKE THIS *LESS* A FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT.
NOW YOU WERE TELLING ME ABOUT THIS AVENGER, *HERCULES*-- DATING A *CELEBRITY*? *FABULOUS!*
IT WASN'T REALLY DATING, *AUGUSTINE*.
WE HAD DINNER A FEW TIMES-- BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.
DON'T TELL ME!
HE WAS A *PIG!*
NO, HE WAS SWEET AND KIND AND GENTLE.
BUT, YOU SEE... I'M *NOT* WELL, AUGUSTINE... AND I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS FAIR TO START A RELATIONSHIP WHEN IT WOULDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO GROW.
RRING!
I... I THINK I'M GOING TO LIE DOWN.
IF THAT'S HERCULES, PLEASE TELL HIM I'M SORRY, BUT I *CAN'T* SEE HIM. HE *HAS* TO UNDERSTAND.
OF COURSE.

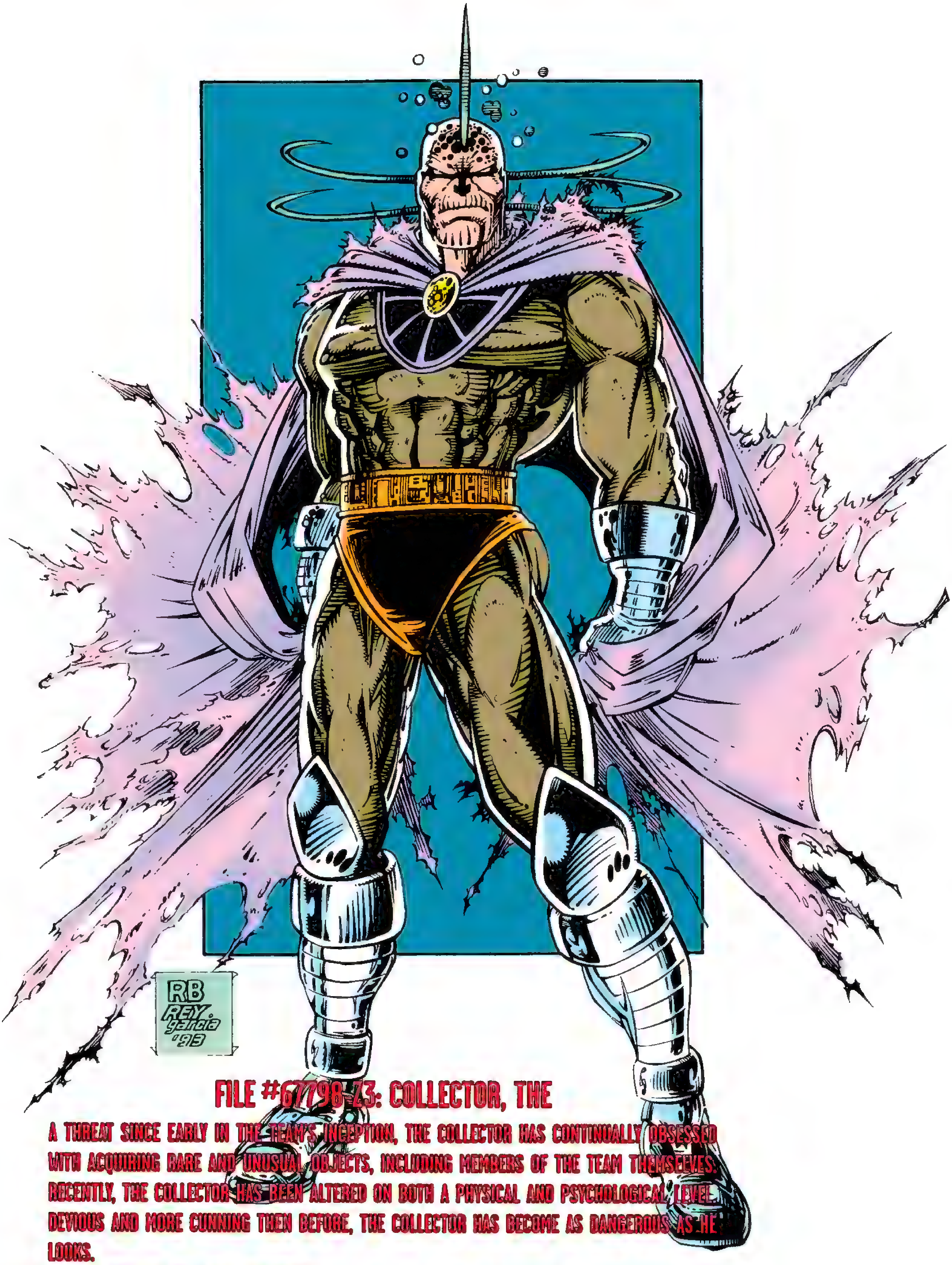

HELLO?
GREETINGS, MILADY.
I AM CALLING FOR TAYLOR MADISON.
IN TRUTH, I DID NOT MEAN TO DISTURB HER--BUT WHEN I SPOKE TO HER THE OTHER DAY, SHE DIDS'T SOUND MOST TIRED.
I WAS CONCERNED FOR HER.
HOW SWEET.
TAYLOR'S FINE. SHE WAS JUST TELLING ME ABOUT YOU!
MADE YOU SOUND LIKE QUITE A CATCH--AND SHE'S DYING TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
IN TRUTH?
IN TRUTH, DARLING! SHE'D LOVE TO MEET YOU FOR DINNER TONIGHT. SHE SUGGESTED LE CIRCE.
THIS...THIS IS UNEXPECTED!
TRUST ME, DARLING, THE SURPRISES ARE JUST BEGINNING!

WUNDAGORE...
INTRIGUING.
AND DISTURBING.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I KNOW THE SLIGHTEST NUANCE OF THE BIOLOGICAL WORKINGS OF MY CREATIONS, MAXIMOFF--
--AND I TELL YOU, BOVA IS NOT SUFFERING FROM ANY ORGANIC ILLNESS.
THEN WHAT IS WRONG WITH HER?
AN OUTSIDE AGENT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED TO HER BODY.
TO MAKE IT CLEARER, IT APPEARS BOVA HAS BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY POISONED OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.
POISONED?!
WHO WOULD DARE?!

I WOULD, MAGNUSSON.
FOR IT ACCOMPLISHED MUCH--IT BROUGHT YOU TO WUNDAGORE AND THE EVOLUTIONARY OUT OF HIS HIDING HOLE.
TWO OF MY GREATEST ENEMIES BROUGHT TOGETHER SO THAT THEY MIGHT PAY FOR THEIR SINS AGAINST MAGNUS, HE-WHO-IS-CALLED-MAGNETO AND ALL THOSE WHO BEAR THE BURDEN OF BEING CALLED MUTANT!
WHO--?!
EXODUS!!
CRYSTAL--KEEP BACK!
I'M NOT THE ONE YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT, PIETRO--
"--LOOK AT FYDOR!"
ARRGHH!
THE LAST DECEPTION IS REVEALED. THE SIMPLE PEASANT--MY UNWILLING PUPPET--IS BEING TRANSFORMED.
YOU WERE WARNED, EVOLUTIONARY. SUCH ABOMINATIONS AGAINST NATURE AS YOU PRODUCE CANNOT BE ALLOWED.
WHO ARE YOU TO THREATEN ME, MUTANT?!


I AM HE WHO SPEAKS IN MAGNETO'S NAME.
I AM *EXODUS*.
AND I HAVE FOUND YOU *WANTING*.
GOODBYE. WE SHALL *NOT* MEET AGAIN IN *THIS* LIFETIME.
FYDOR!
WHAT HAS HE DONE TO YOU?!
SHUTTUP, CREATURE!
FYDOR NO LONGER EXISTS-- I HAVE TRANSFORMED HIM! EXODUS HAS ORDERED YOUR DEATHS, BLASPHEMERS--
"--SO HE HAS SAID, SO SHALL IT BE DONE!"
K-BROOOOM
TO BE CONTINUED...

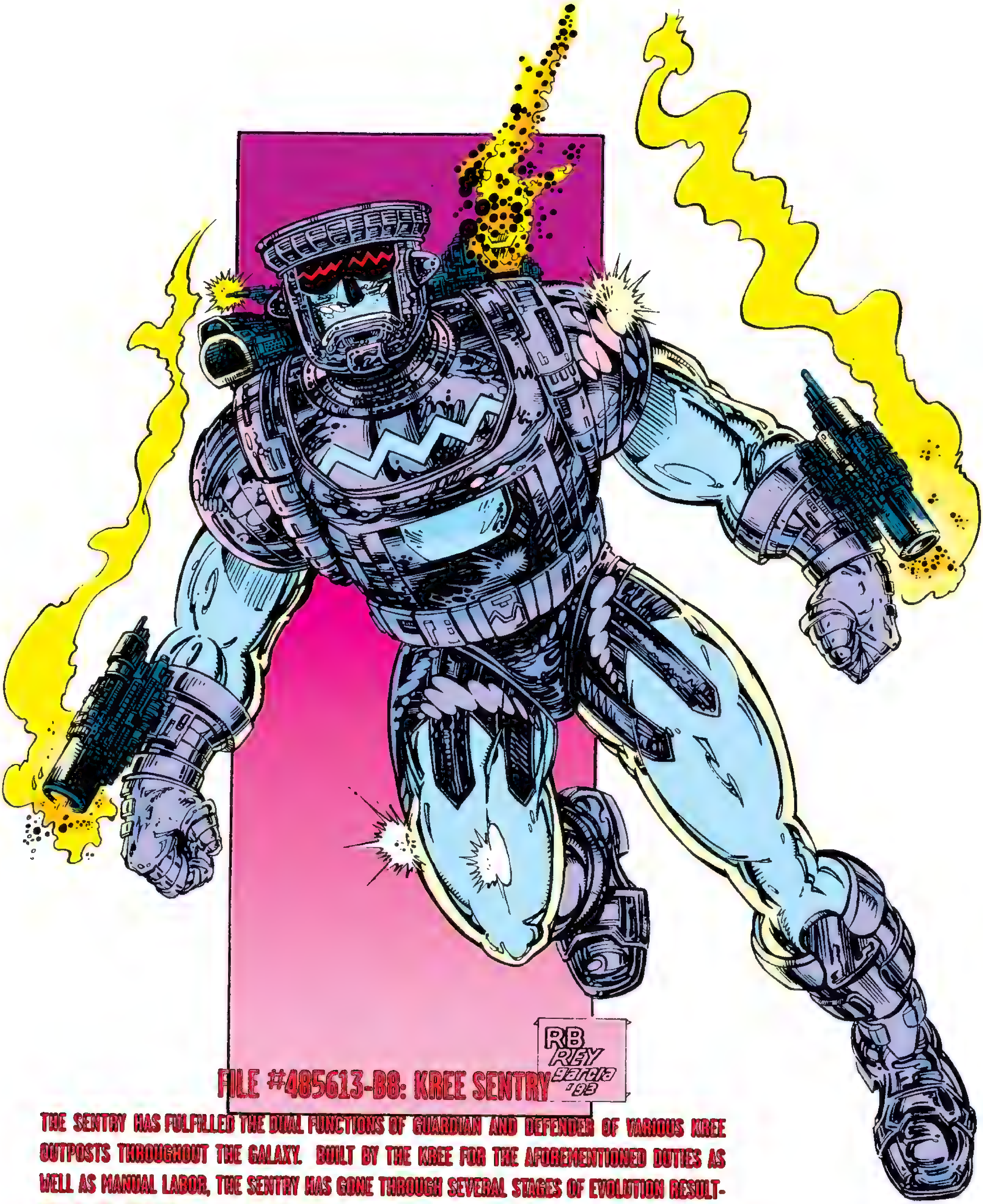

CAPTAIN AMERICA
THE SENTINEL OF LIBERTY HAS BEEN BETRAYED--BY HIS OWN BODY. NOW, AS HE STRUGGLES AGAINST HIS INEVITABLE DECLINE, HE'S MAKING CERTAIN HIS FOES NEVER TROUBLE ANYONE --AGAIN.
CHECK OUT CAP'S SOLO ADVENTURES, BROUGHT TO YOU MONTHLY BY: MARK GRUENWALD, DAVE HOOVER AND DANNY BULANADI.
DAILY BUGLE
STAN LEE CONFESSES!



FILE #67798-Z3: COLLECTOR, THE

A THREAT SINCE EARLY IN THE TEAM'S INCEPTION, THE COLLECTOR HAS CONTINUALLY OBSESSED WITH ACQUIRING RARE AND UNUSUAL OBJECTS, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE TEAM THEMSELVES. RECENTLY, THE COLLECTOR HAS BEEN ALTERED ON BOTH A PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL LEVEL. DEVIOUS AND MORE CUNNING THEN BEFORE, THE COLLECTOR HAS BECOME AS DANGEROUS AS HE LOOKS.

FILED BY: CAPTAIN AMERICA

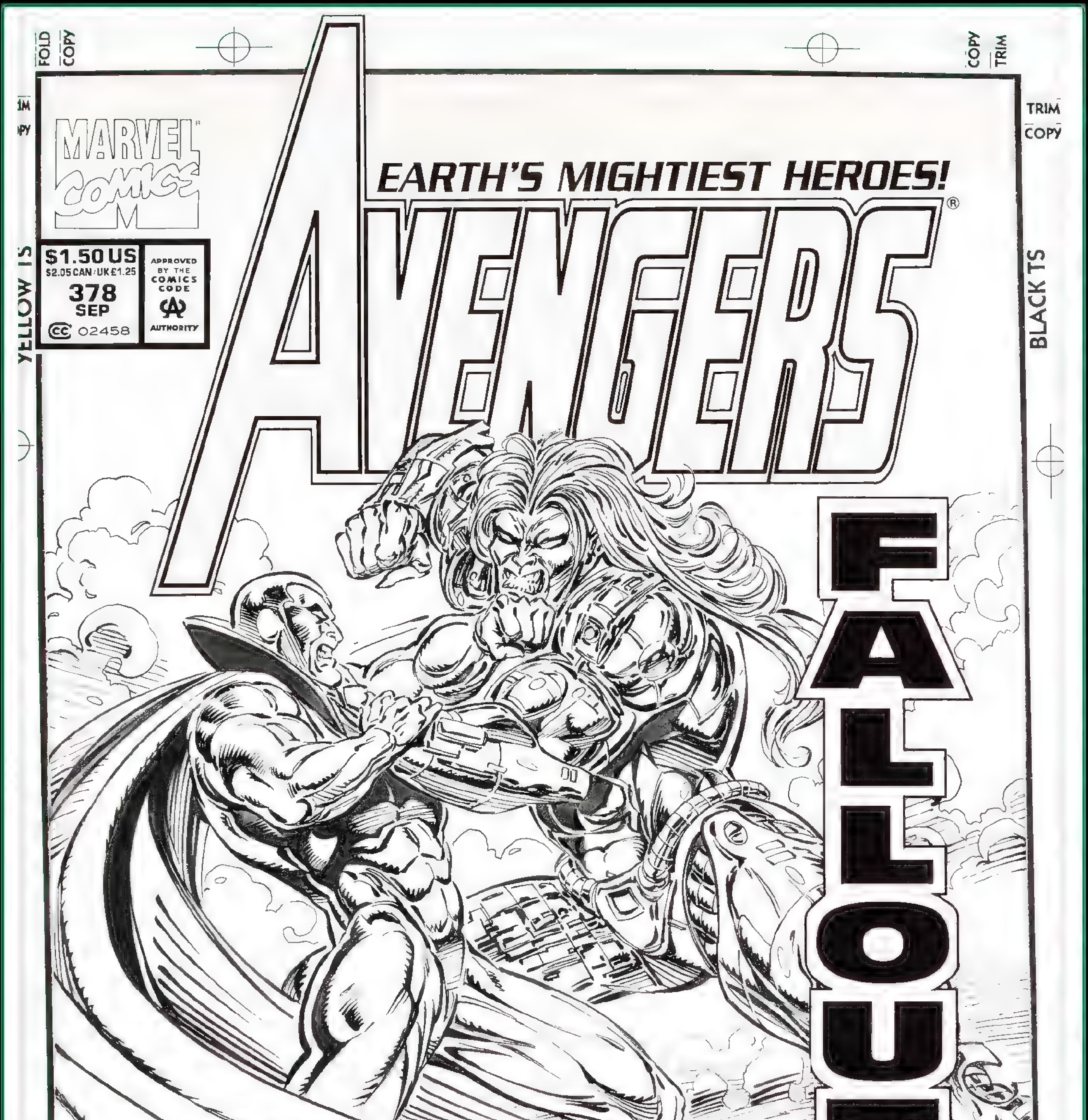


FILE #485613-B8: KREE SENTRY

THE SENTRY HAS FULFILLED THE DUAL FUNCTIONS OF GUARDIAN AND DEFENDER OF VARIOUS KREE OUTPOSTS THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY. BUILT BY THE KREE FOR THE AFOREMENTIONED DUTIES AS WELL AS MANUAL LABOR, THE SENTRY HAS GONE THROUGH SEVERAL STAGES OF EVOLUTION RESULTING IN THE PRESENT MODEL. RECENTLY, A SQUADRON OF SENTRIES WERE UTILIZED AS OFFENSIVE WEAPONS AGAINST EARTH, MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE AVENGERS BY A GROUP OF RENEGADE KREE WHO BLAME THE AVENGERS FOR THE DETONATION OF THE NEGA BOMB.

FILED BY: VISION

John Eboigbe
5-94


MARVEL COMICS
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES!
AVENGERS
$1.50 US
$2.05 CAN / UK £1.25
378
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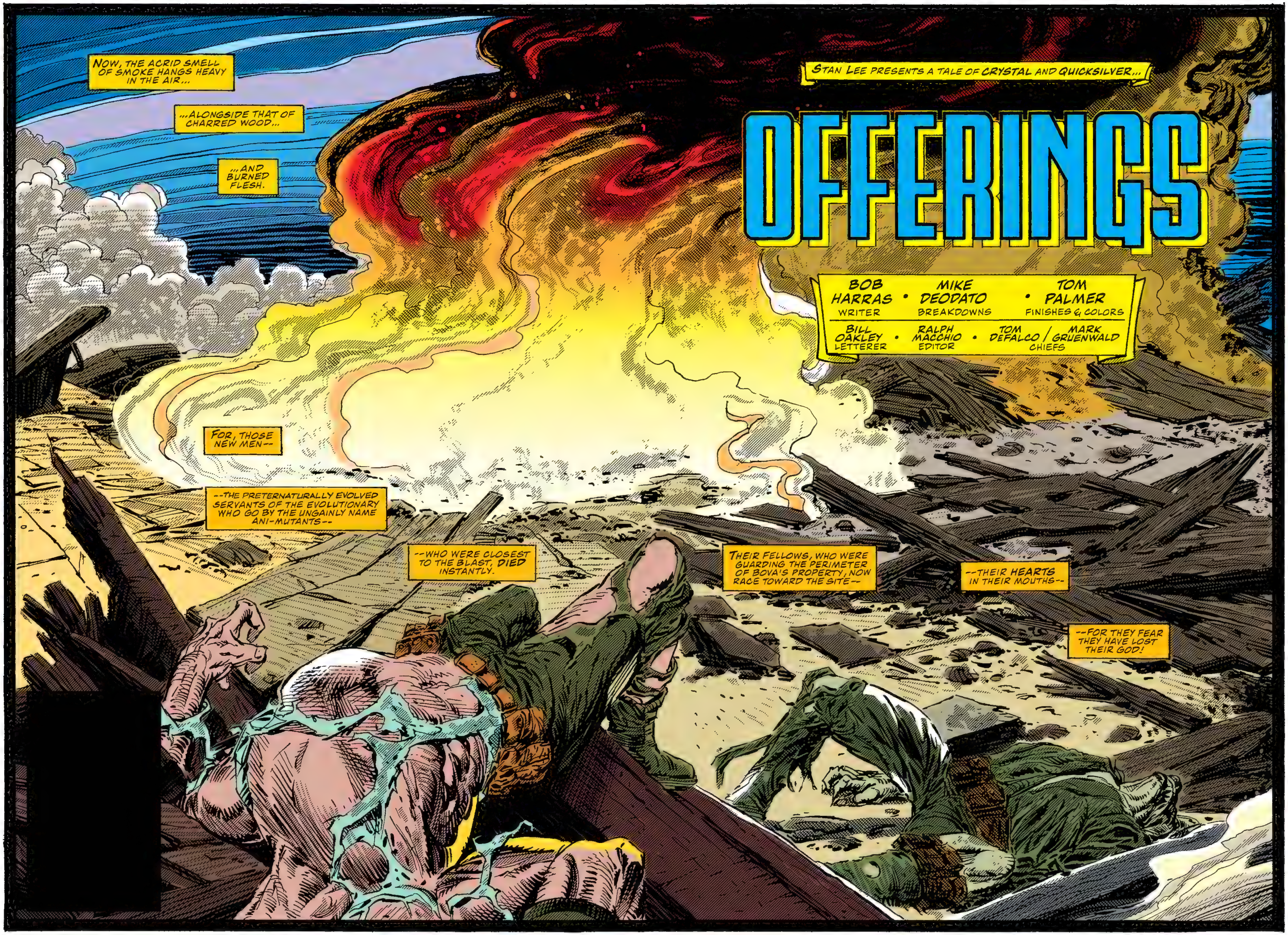
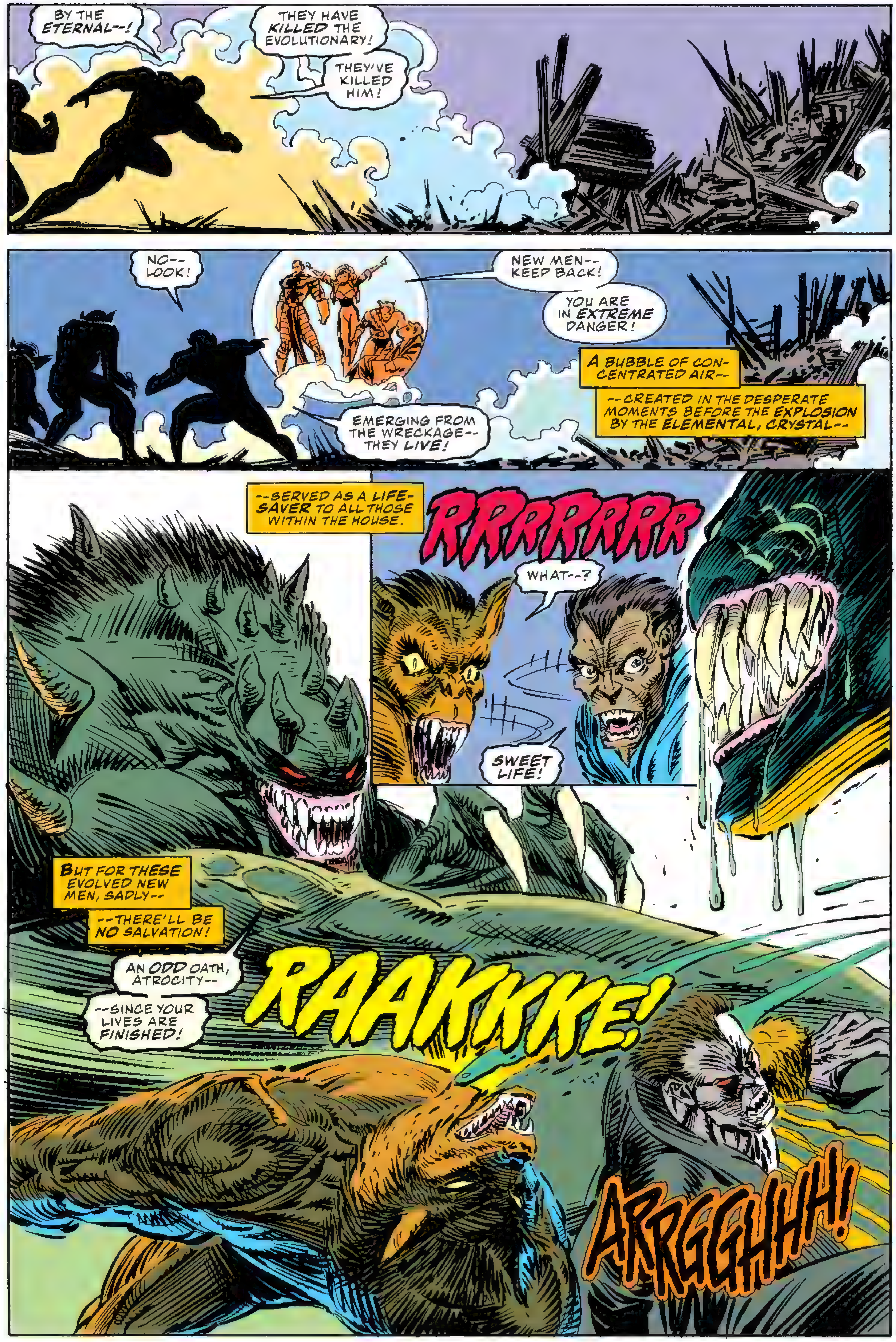
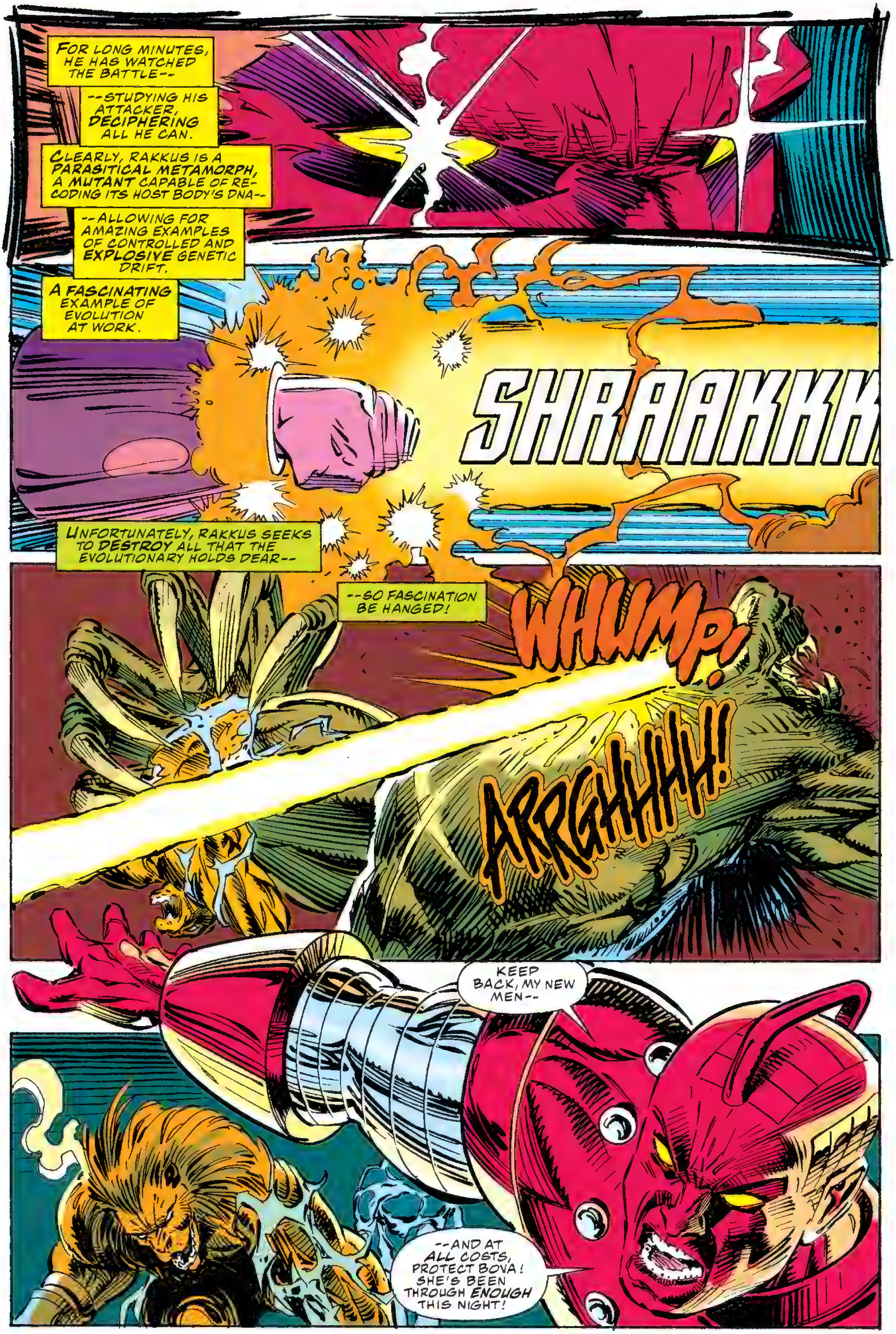
MARVEL COMICS
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE CA AUTHORITY
382
JAN '95
EPTING
PALMER

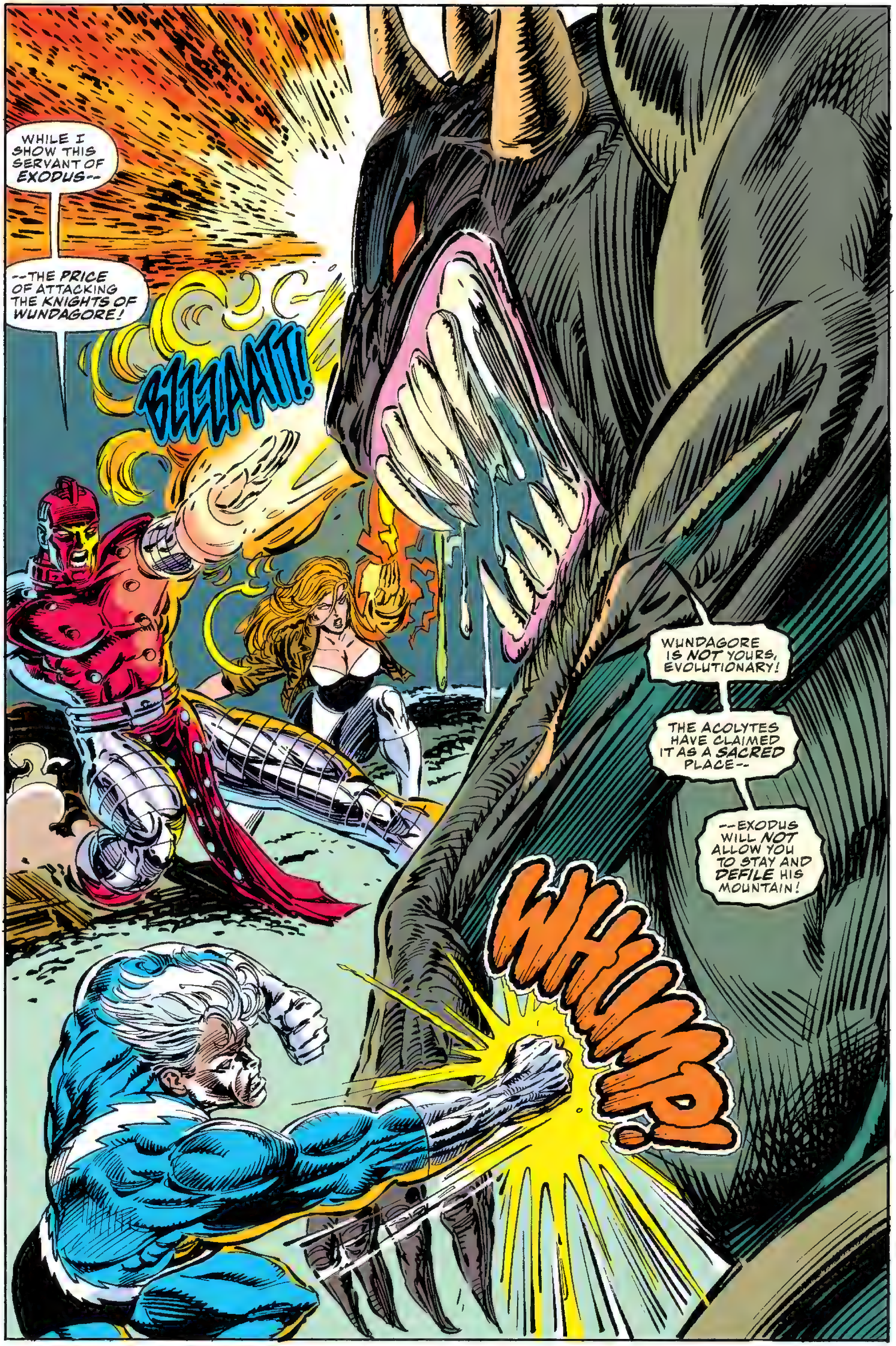
INSTANT RECAP DEPARTMENT:
A SHORT TIME AGO, QUICKSILVER AND HIS WIFE, CRYSTAL, JOURNEYED TO THE TRANSIAN MOUNTAIN, WUNDAGORE...
...TO VISIT THEIR DYING FRIEND, THE EVOLVED SHE-COW, BOVA.
IN ORDER TO SAVE BOVA'S LIFE, THE TWO AVENGERS JOURNEYED TO THE HEART OF WUNDAGORE...
...AND CONFRONTED BOVA'S CREATOR, THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
AFTER A BITTER MISUNDERSTANDING, THE EVOLUTIONARY CAME TO BOVA'S COTTAGE...
...AND DISCOVERED THE GENTLE CREATURE WAS BEING POISONED.
IT WAS THEN THAT THE ACOLYTE, EXODUS REVEALED HIMSELF TO BE RESPONSIBLE.
MYSTERIOUSLY CLAIMING WUNDAGORE FOR HIMSELF AND DETERMINED TO ELIMINATE HIS RIVAL, QUICKSILVER ONCE AND FOR ALL...
...EXODUS MUTATED BOVA'S FRIEND, THE SHEPHERD CALLED FYDOR, INTO THE CREATURE RAKKUS...
...WHO, IN TURN, FOLLOWING HIS MASTER'S WISHES...
...BLEW UP BOVA'S COTTAGE AND EVERYONE WITHIN IT.

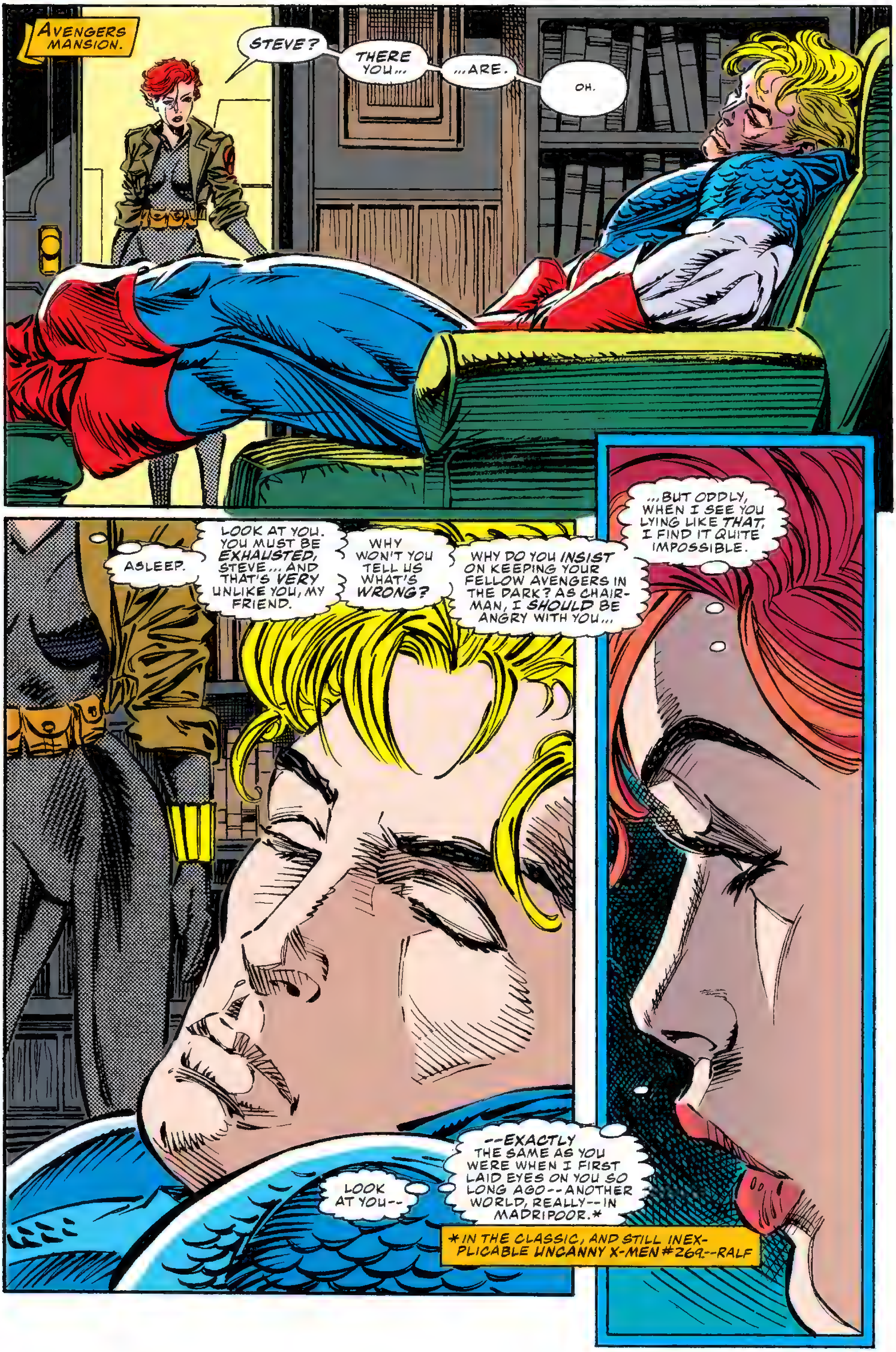

NOW, THE ACRID SMELL OF SMOKE HANGS HEAVY IN THE AIR...
...ALONGSIDE THAT OF CHARRED WOOD...
...AND BURNED FLESH.
STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF CRYSTAL AND QUICKSILVER...
OFFERINGS
BOB HARRAS WRITER • MIKE DEODATO BREAKDOWNS • TOM PALMER FINISHES & COLORS
BILL OAKLEY LETTERER • RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR • TOM DEFALCO / MARK GRUENWALD CHIEFS
FOR, THOSE NEW MEN--
--THE PRETERNATURALLY EVOLVED SERVANTS OF THE EVOLUTIONARY WHO GO BY THE UNGAINLY NAME ANI-MUTANTS--
--WHO WERE CLOSEST TO THE BLAST, DIED INSTANTLY.
THEIR FELLOWS, WHO WERE GUARDING THE PERIMETER OF BOVA'S PROPERTY, NOW RACE TOWARD THE SITE--
--THEIR HEARTS IN THEIR MOUTHS--
--FOR THEY FEAR THEY HAVE LOST THEIR GOD!

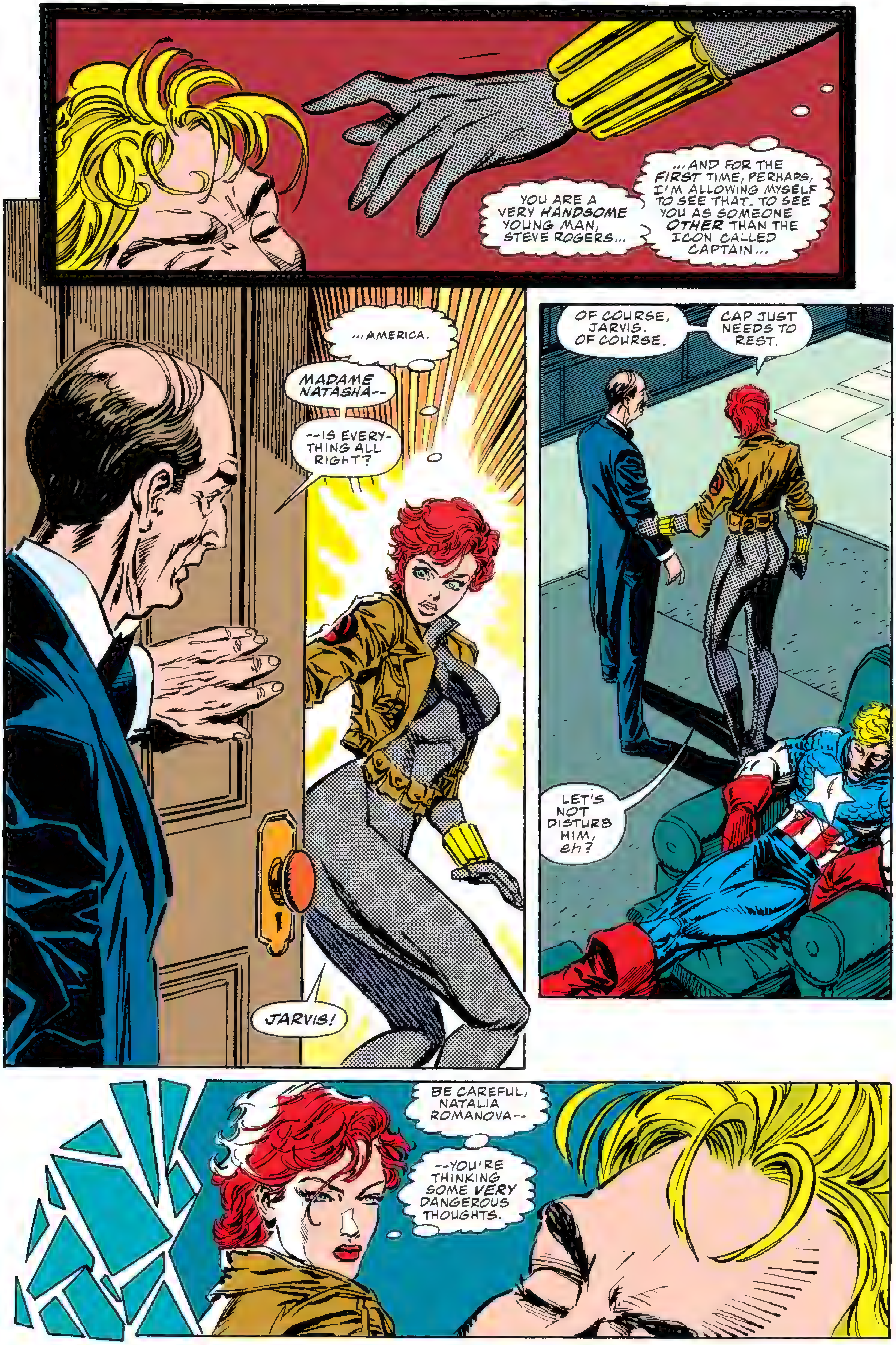

BY THE ETERNAL--!
THEY HAVE KILLED THE EVOLUTIONARY!
THEY'VE KILLED HIM!
NO-- LOOK!
NEW MEN-- KEEP BACK!
YOU ARE IN EXTREME DANGER!
A BUBBLE OF CONCENTRATED AIR--
--CREATED IN THE DESPERATE MOMENTS BEFORE THE EXPLOSION BY THE ELEMENTAL, CRYSTAL--
EMERGING FROM THE WRECKAGE-- THEY LIVE!
--SERVED AS A LIFE-SAVER TO ALL THOSE WITHIN THE HOUSE.
RRRRRRR
WHAT--?
SWEET LIFE!
BUT FOR THESE EVOLVED NEW MEN, SADLY--
--THERE'LL BE NO SALVATION!
AN ODD OATH, ATROCITY--
--SINCE YOUR LIVES ARE FINISHED!
RAAKKKE!
ARRGGHHH!

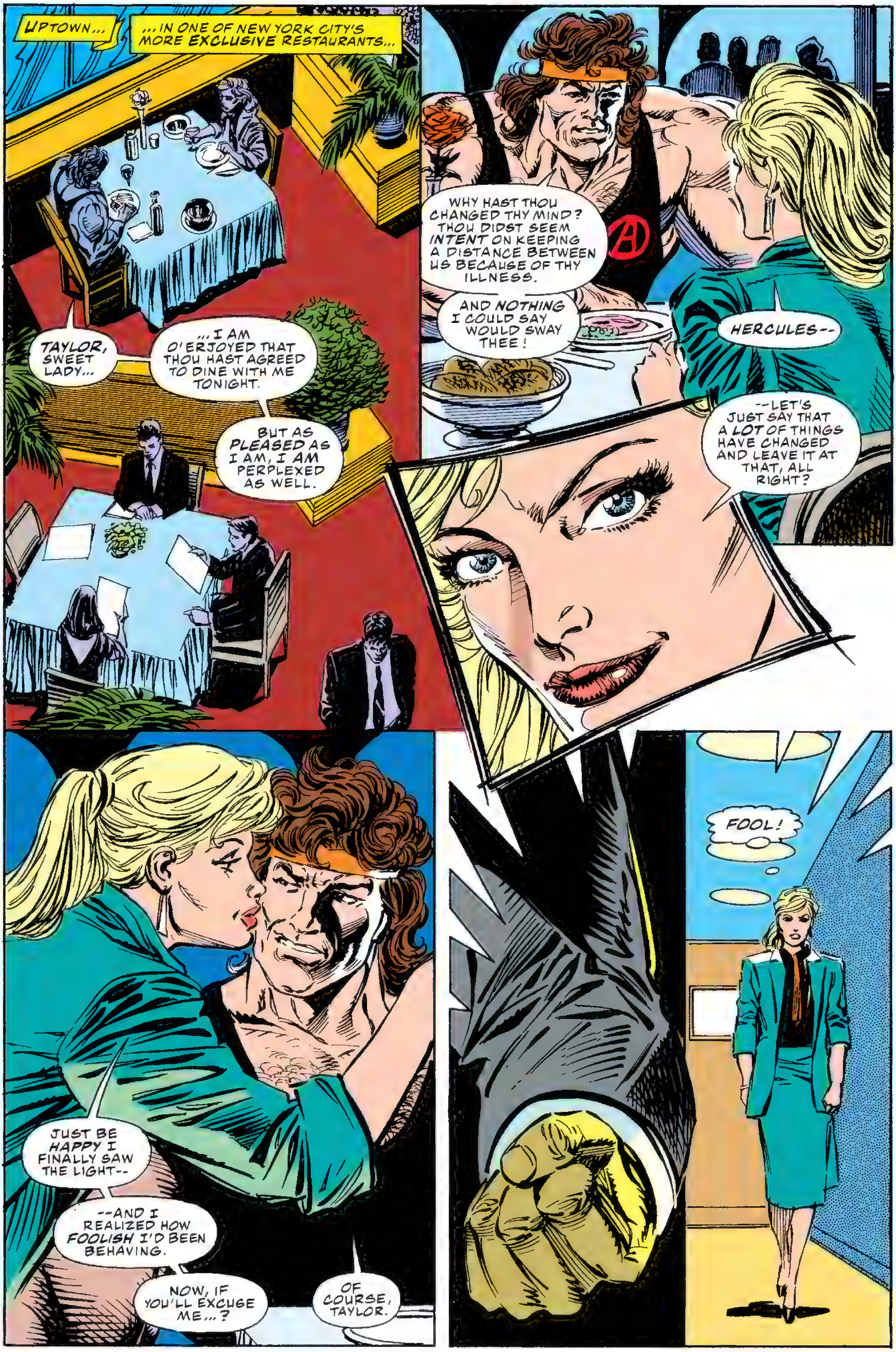
AND SO WILL *DIE* ALL CREATIONS OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY!
LOOK OUT!
I DON'T THINK SO, ACOLYTE--
--NOT WHILE I STILL LIVE!
SZZZTTT!
DON'T *TEMPT* ME, MAGNUSSON--
--REST ASSURED *YOUR* TIME IS COMING!
BZZZAATTT!
NOT IF *WE* CAN HELP IT, CREATURE!
NO--THIS CANNOT BE!
YOU WERE *FYDOR*-- YOU WERE MY FRIEND --MY *DEAREST* FRIEND--
--YOU CANNOT BE THIS--THIS *HORRIFIC* THING!
ARGHHHH!
I AM *RAKKUS,* FEMALE--
--YOUR FRIEND IS NO MORE--
--SUCH IS THE *WILL* OF *EXODUS!*

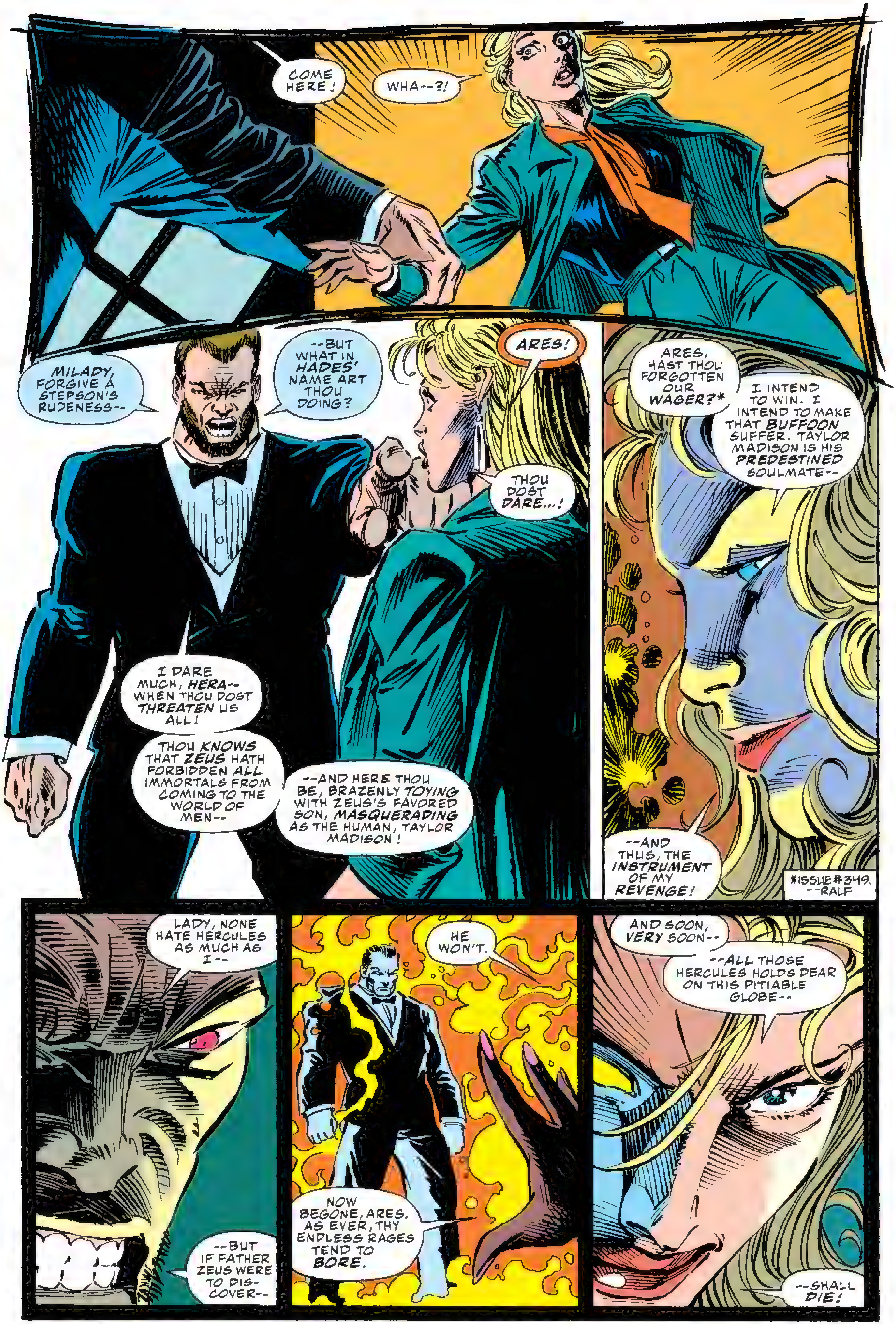

For long minutes, he has watched the battle--
--studying his attacker, deciphering all he can.
Clearly, Rakkus is a parasitical metamorph, a mutant capable of re-coding its host body's DNA--
--allowing for amazing examples of controlled and explosive genetic drift.
A fascinating example of evolution at work.
SHRAAKKK
Unfortunately, Rakkus seeks to destroy all that the Evolutionary holds dear--
--so fascination be hanged!
WHUMP!
ARRGHHH!
Keep back, my New Men--
--and at all costs, protect Bova! She's been through enough this night!

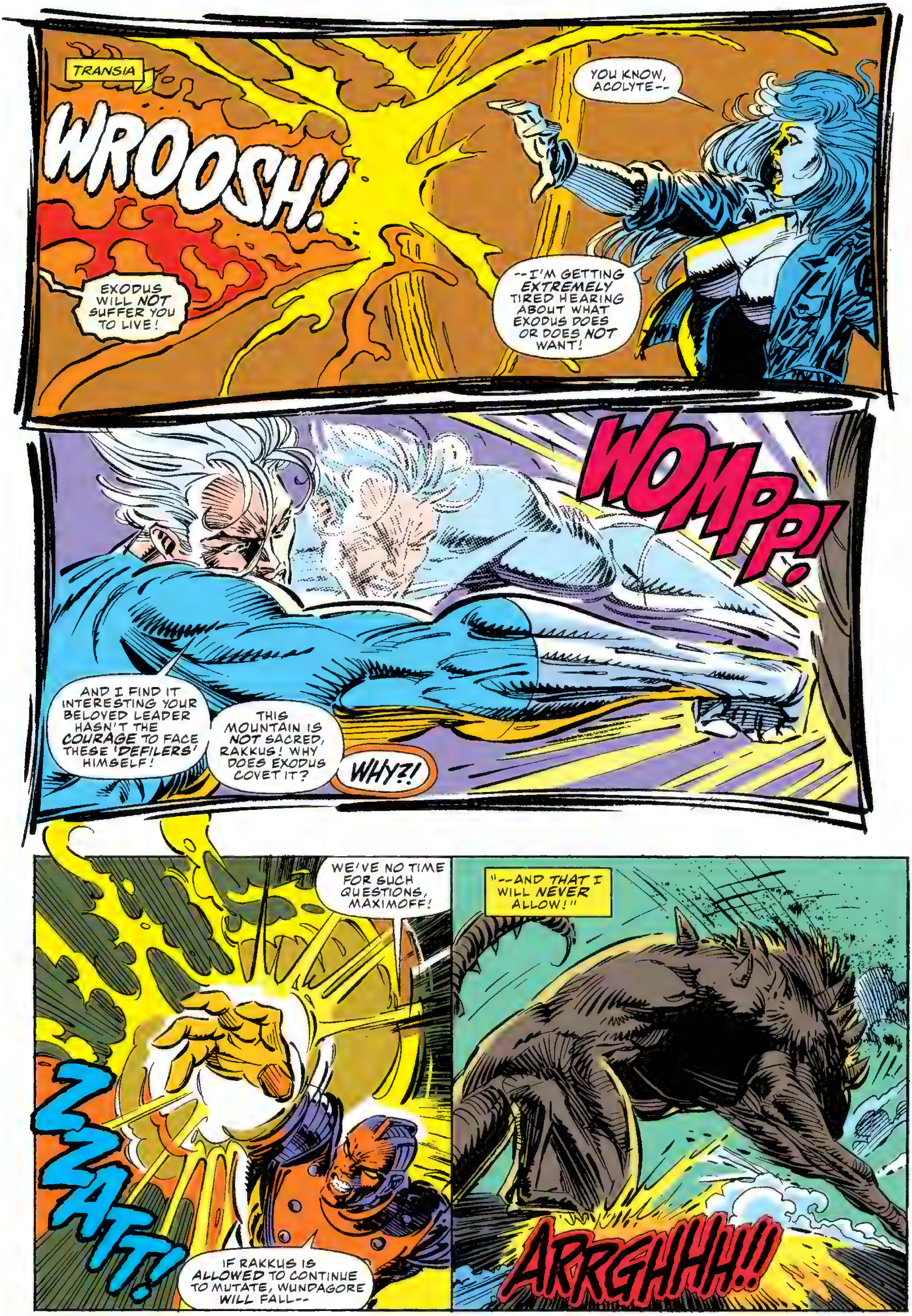

WHILE I SHOW THIS SERVANT OF *EXODUS*--
--THE *PRICE* OF ATTACKING THE *KNIGHTS OF WUNDAGORE!*
BZZZAATT!
WUNDAGORE IS *NOT* YOURS, EVOLUTIONARY!
THE ACOLYTES HAVE CLAIMED IT AS A *SACRED* PLACE--
--EXODUS WILL *NOT* ALLOW YOU TO STAY AND *DEFILE* HIS MOUNTAIN!
WHUMP!

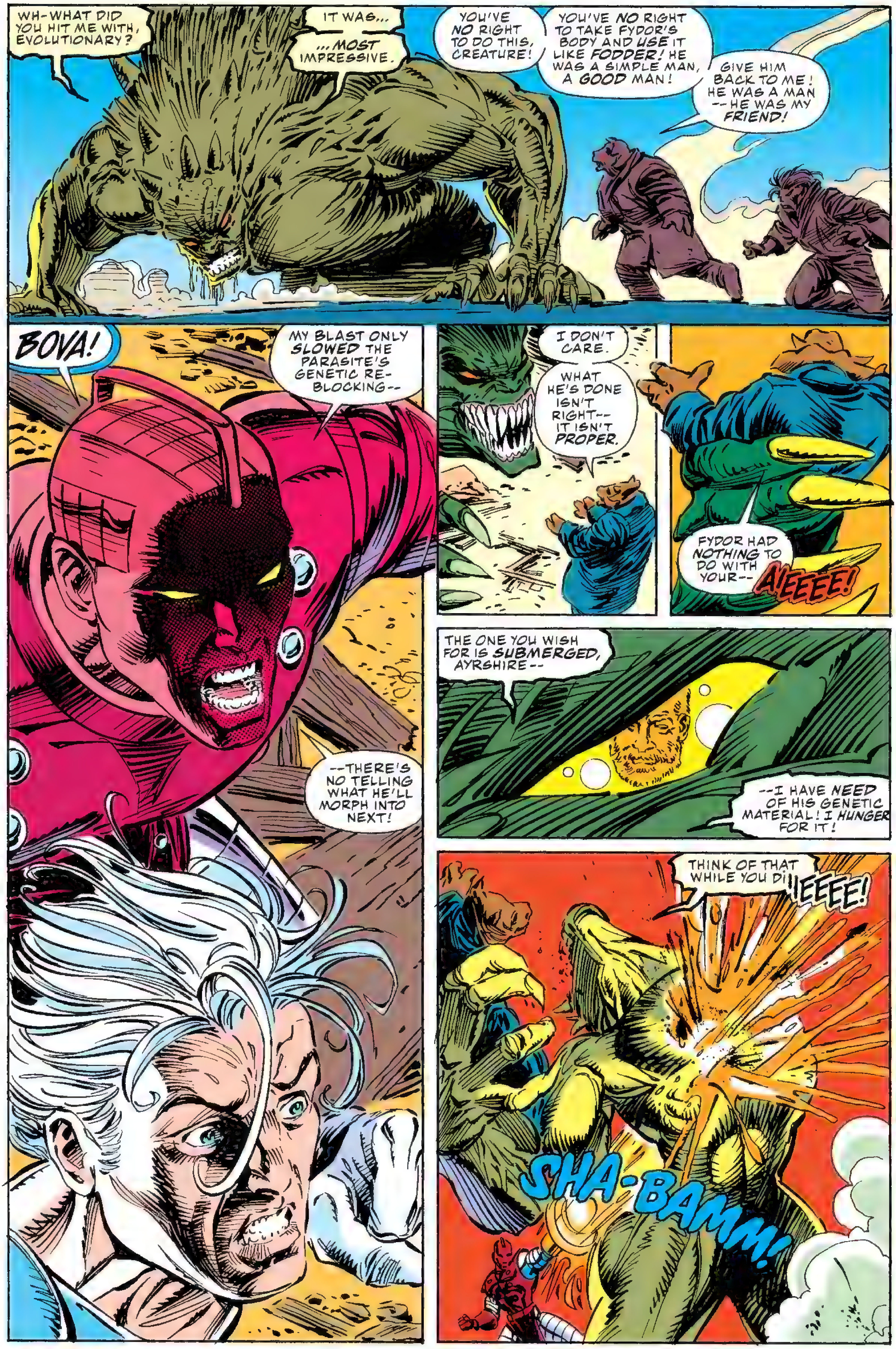

AVENGERS MANSION.
STEVE?
THERE YOU...
...ARE.
OH.
ASLEEP.
LOOK AT YOU. YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED, STEVE... AND THAT'S VERY UNLIKE YOU, MY FRIEND.
WHY WON'T YOU TELL US WHAT'S WRONG?
WHY DO YOU INSIST ON KEEPING YOUR FELLOW AVENGERS IN THE DARK? AS CHAIRMAN, I SHOULD BE ANGRY WITH YOU...
...BUT ODDLY, WHEN I SEE YOU LYING LIKE THAT, I FIND IT QUITE IMPOSSIBLE.
LOOK AT YOU--
--EXACTLY THE SAME AS YOU WERE WHEN I FIRST LAID EYES ON YOU SO LONG AGO--ANOTHER WORLD, REALLY--IN MADRIPOOR.*
*IN THE CLASSIC, AND STILL INEXPLICABLE UNCANNY X-MEN #269--RALF

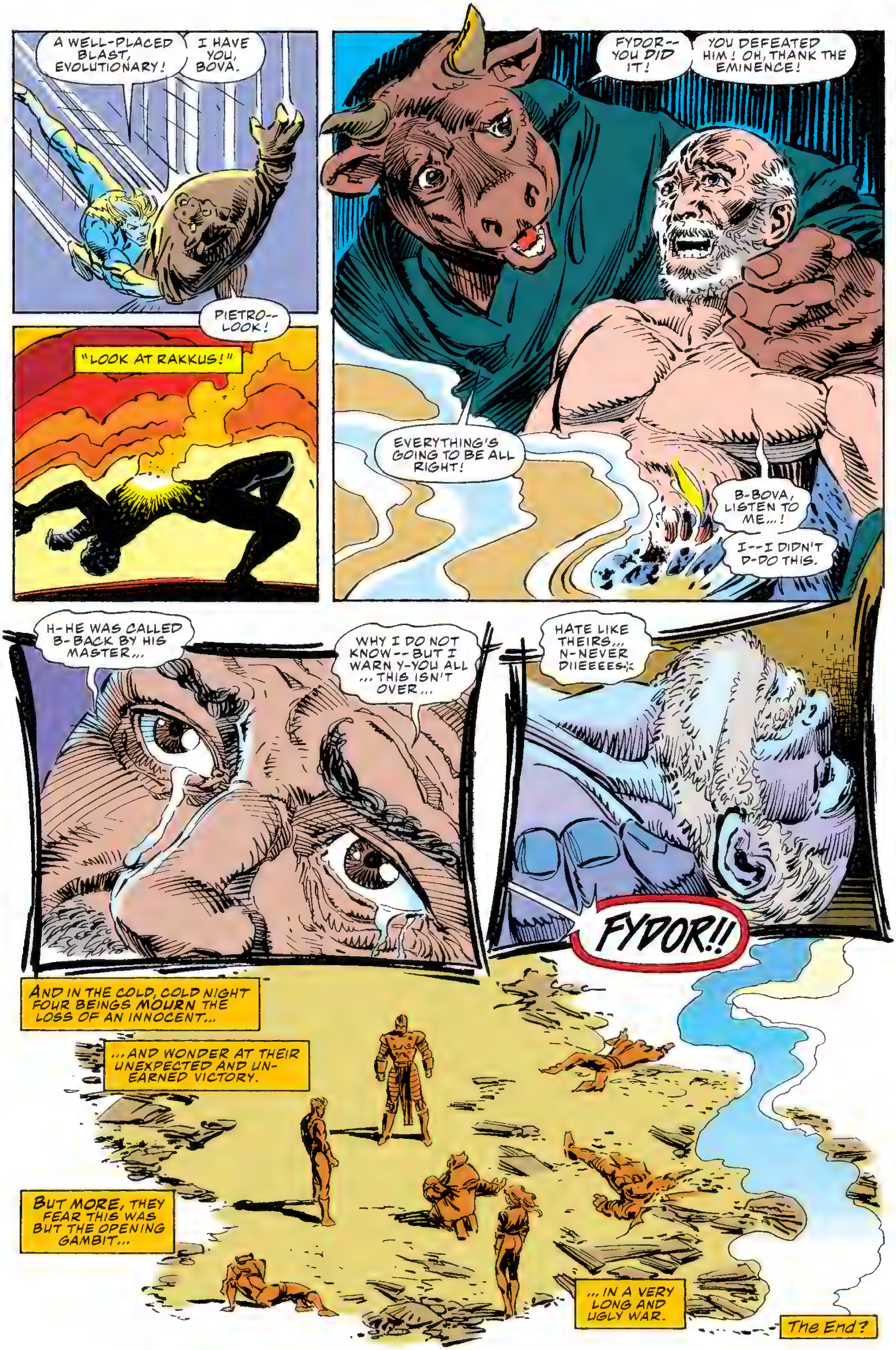

YOU ARE A VERY *HANDSOME* YOUNG MAN, STEVE ROGERS...
...AND FOR THE *FIRST* TIME, PERHAPS, I'M ALLOWING MYSELF TO SEE THAT. TO SEE YOU AS SOMEONE *OTHER* THAN THE ICON CALLED CAPTAIN...
...AMERICA.
MADAME NATASHA--
--IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
JARVIS!
OF COURSE, JARVIS. OF COURSE.
CAP JUST NEEDS TO REST.
LET'S NOT DISTURB HIM, eh?
BE CAREFUL, NATALIA ROMANOVA--
--YOU'RE THINKING SOME *VERY* DANGEROUS THOUGHTS.

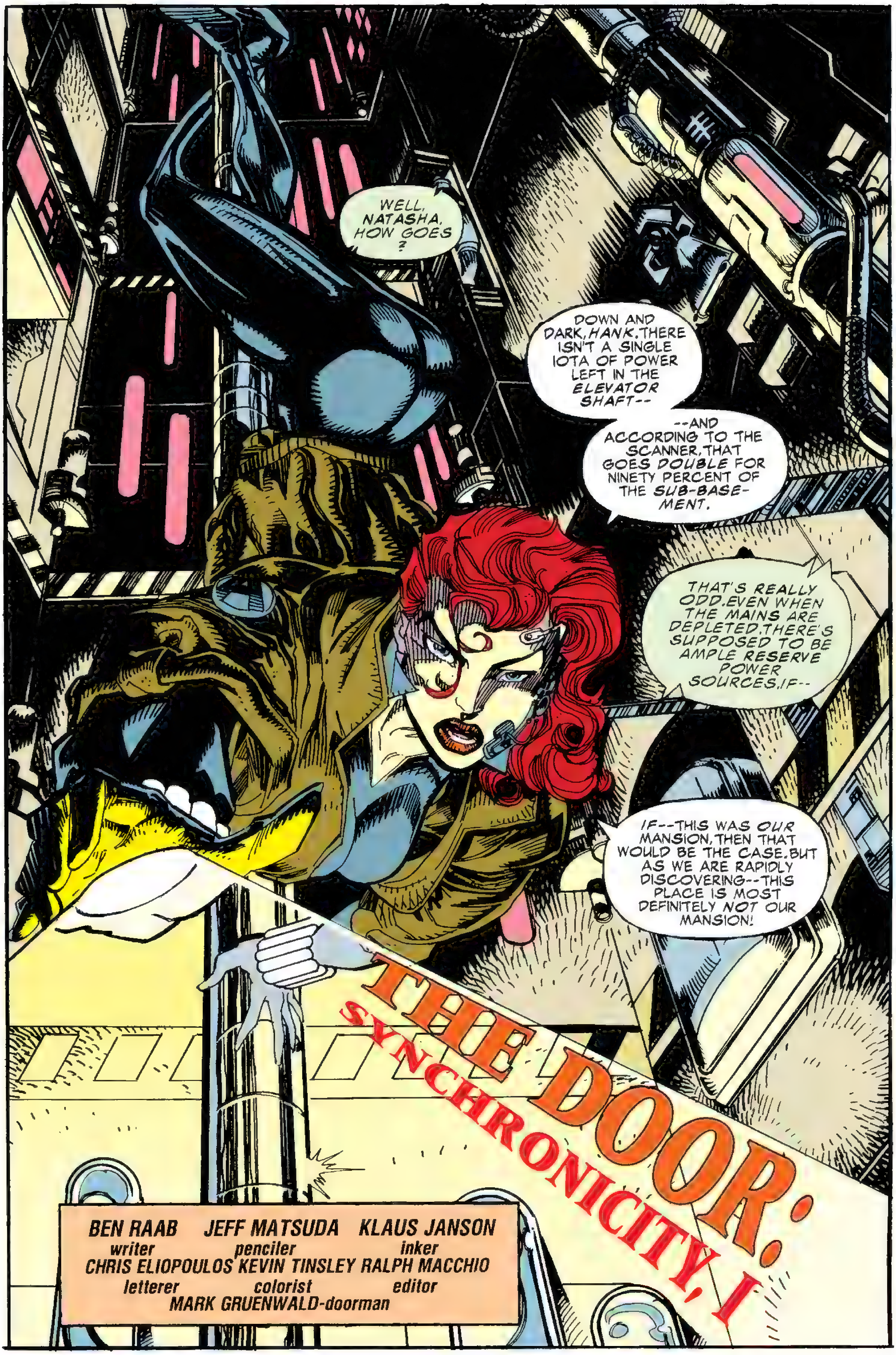

UPTOWN...
...IN ONE OF NEW YORK CITY'S MORE EXCLUSIVE RESTAURANTS...
TAYLOR, SWEET LADY...
...I AM O'ERJOYED THAT THOU HAST AGREED TO DINE WITH ME TONIGHT.
BUT AS PLEASED AS I AM, I AM PERPLEXED AS WELL.
WHY HAST THOU CHANGED THY MIND? THOU DIDST SEEM INTENT ON KEEPING A DISTANCE BETWEEN US BECAUSE OF THY ILLNESS.
AND NOTHING I COULD SAY WOULD SWAY THEE!
HERCULES--
--LET'S JUST SAY THAT A LOT OF THINGS HAVE CHANGED AND LEAVE IT AT THAT, ALL RIGHT?
JUST BE HAPPY I FINALLY SAW THE LIGHT--
--AND I REALIZED HOW FOOLISH I'D BEEN BEHAVING.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...?
OF COURSE, TAYLOR.
FOOL!


COME HERE!
WHA--?!
MILADY, FORGIVE A STEPSON'S RUDENESS--
--BUT WHAT IN HADES' NAME ART THOU DOING?
ARES!
THOU DOST DARE...!
I DARE MUCH, HERA-- WHEN THOU DOST THREATEN US ALL!
THOU KNOWS THAT ZEUS HATH FORBIDDEN ALL IMMORTALS FROM COMING TO THE WORLD OF MEN--
--AND HERE THOU BE, BRAZENLY TOYING WITH ZEUS'S FAVORED SON, MASQUERADING AS THE HUMAN, TAYLOR MADISON!
ARES, HAST THOU FORGOTTEN OUR WAGER?*
I INTEND TO WIN. I INTEND TO MAKE THAT BUFFOON SUFFER. TAYLOR MADISON IS HIS PREDESTINED SOULMATE--
--AND THUS, THE INSTRUMENT OF MY REVENGE!
*ISSUE #349. --RALF
LADY, NONE HATE HERCULES AS MUCH AS I--
--BUT IF FATHER ZEUS WERE TO DISCOVER--
HE WON'T.
NOW BEGONE, ARES. AS EVER, THY ENDLESS RAGES TEND TO BORE.
AND SOON, VERY SOON--
--ALL THOSE HERCULES HOLDS DEAR ON THIS PITIABLE GLOBE--
--SHALL DIE!


TRANSIA
WROOSH!
EXODUS WILL *NOT* SUFFER YOU TO LIVE!
YOU KNOW, ACOLYTE--
--I'M GETTING *EXTREMELY* TIRED HEARING ABOUT WHAT EXODUS DOES OR DOES *NOT* WANT!
WOMPP!
AND I FIND IT INTERESTING YOUR BELOVED LEADER HASN'T THE *COURAGE* TO FACE THESE '*DEFILERS*' HIMSELF!
THIS MOUNTAIN IS *NOT* SACRED, RAKKUS! WHY DOES EXODUS COVET IT?
WHY?!
WE'VE NO TIME FOR SUCH QUESTIONS, MAXIMOFF!
ZZAATT!
IF RAKKUS IS *ALLOWED* TO CONTINUE TO MUTATE, WUNDAGORE WILL FALL--
"--AND *THAT* I WILL *NEVER* ALLOW!"
ARRGHHH!!

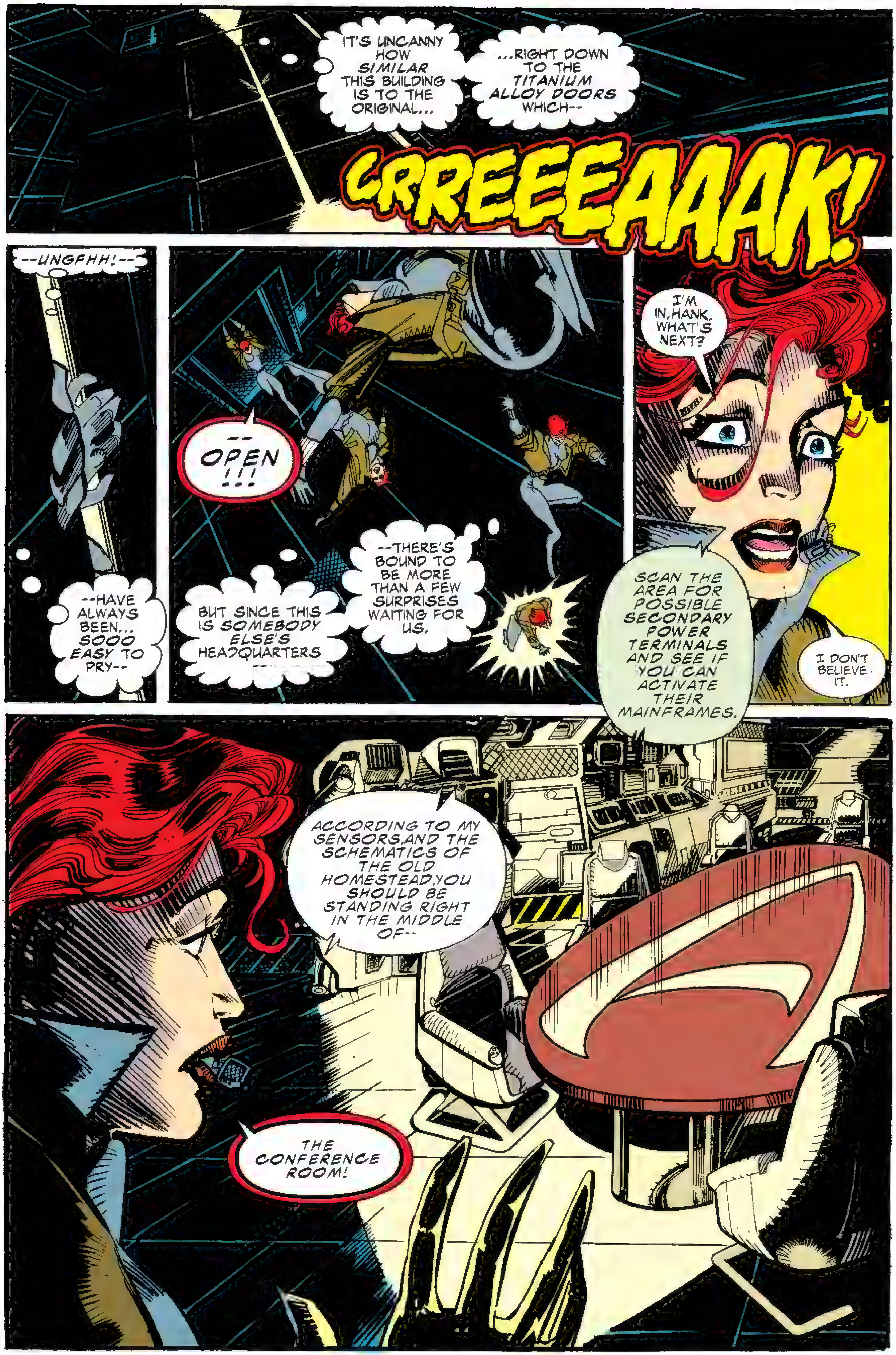

WH-WHAT DID YOU HIT ME WITH, EVOLUTIONARY?
IT WAS...
...MOST IMPRESSIVE.
YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO DO THIS, CREATURE!
YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO TAKE FYDOR'S BODY AND USE IT LIKE FODDER! HE WAS A SIMPLE MAN, A GOOD MAN!
GIVE HIM BACK TO ME! HE WAS A MAN --HE WAS MY FRIEND!
BOVA!
MY BLAST ONLY SLOWED THE PARASITE'S GENETIC RE-BLOCKING--
--THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT HE'LL MORPH INTO NEXT!
I DON'T CARE.
WHAT HE'S DONE ISN'T RIGHT-- IT ISN'T PROPER.
FYDOR HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR--
AIEEEE!
THE ONE YOU WISH FOR IS SUBMERGED, AYRSHIRE--
--I HAVE NEED OF HIS GENETIC MATERIAL! I HUNGER FOR IT!
THINK OF THAT WHILE YOU DI
IEEEE!
SHA-BAMM!

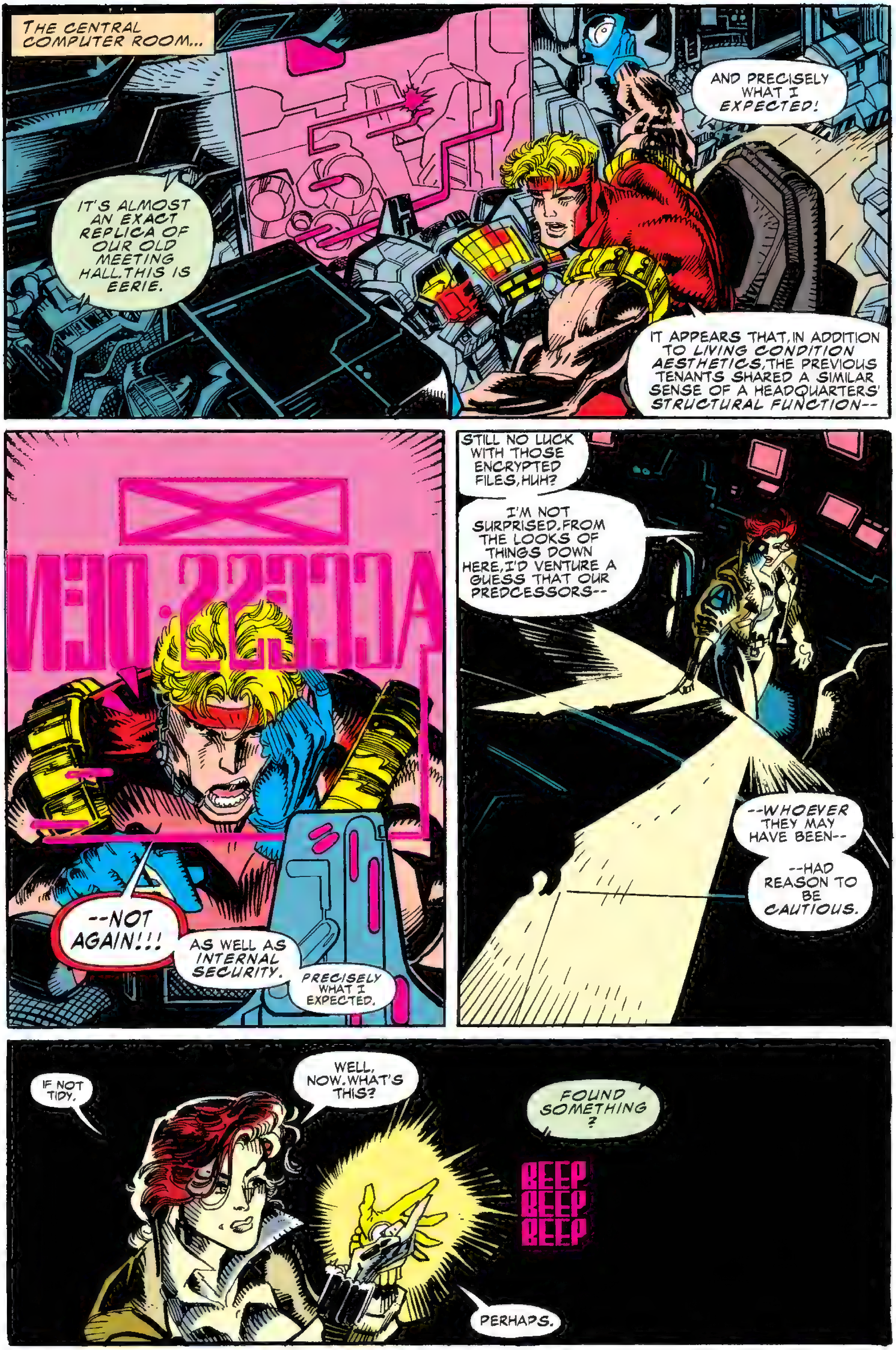

A WELL-PLACED BLAST, EVOLUTIONARY!
I HAVE YOU, BOVA.
PIETRO-- LOOK!
"LOOK AT RAKKUS!"
FYDOR-- YOU DID IT!
YOU DEFEATED HIM! OH, THANK THE EMINENCE!
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT!
B-BOVA, LISTEN TO ME...!
I--I DIDN'T D-DO THIS.
H-HE WAS CALLED B-BACK BY HIS MASTER...
WHY I DO NOT KNOW--BUT I WARN Y-YOU ALL ...THIS ISN'T OVER...
HATE LIKE THEIRS... N-NEVER DIIEEEES-:
FYDOR!!
AND IN THE COLD, COLD NIGHT FOUR BEINGS MOURN THE LOSS OF AN INNOCENT...
...AND WONDER AT THEIR UNEXPECTED AND UN-EARNED VICTORY.
BUT MORE, THEY FEAR THIS WAS BUT THE OPENING GAMBIT...
...IN A VERY LONG AND UGLY WAR.
The End?

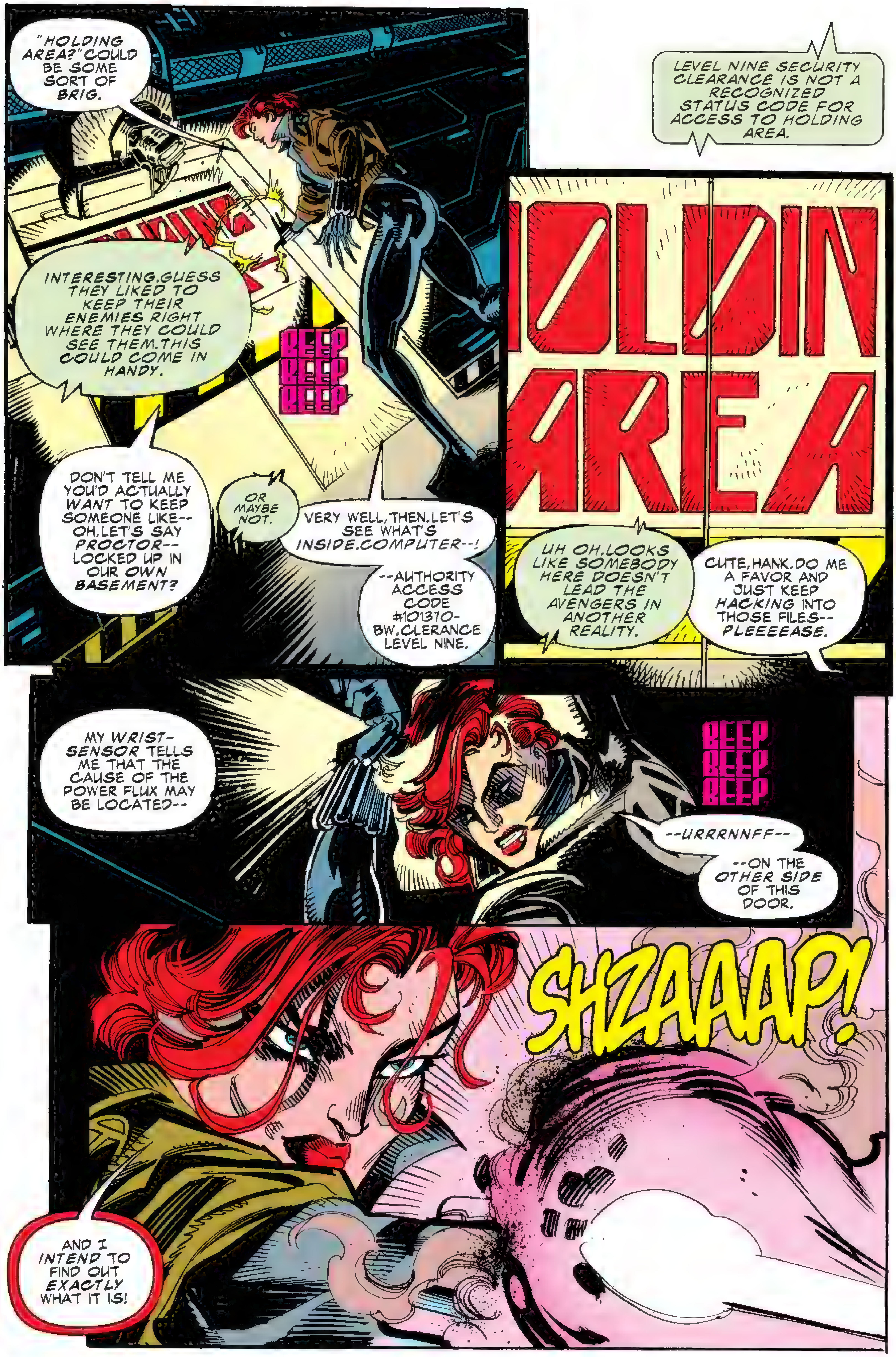

WELL, NATASHA, HOW GOES ?
DOWN AND DARK, HANK. THERE ISN'T A SINGLE IOTA OF POWER LEFT IN THE ELEVATOR SHAFT--
--AND ACCORDING TO THE SCANNER, THAT GOES DOUBLE FOR NINETY PERCENT OF THE SUB-BASEMENT.
THAT'S REALLY ODD. EVEN WHEN THE MAINS ARE DEPLETED, THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE AMPLE RESERVE POWER SOURCES, IF--
IF--THIS WAS OUR MANSION, THEN THAT WOULD BE THE CASE. BUT AS WE ARE RAPIDLY DISCOVERING--THIS PLACE IS MOST DEFINITELY NOT OUR MANSION!

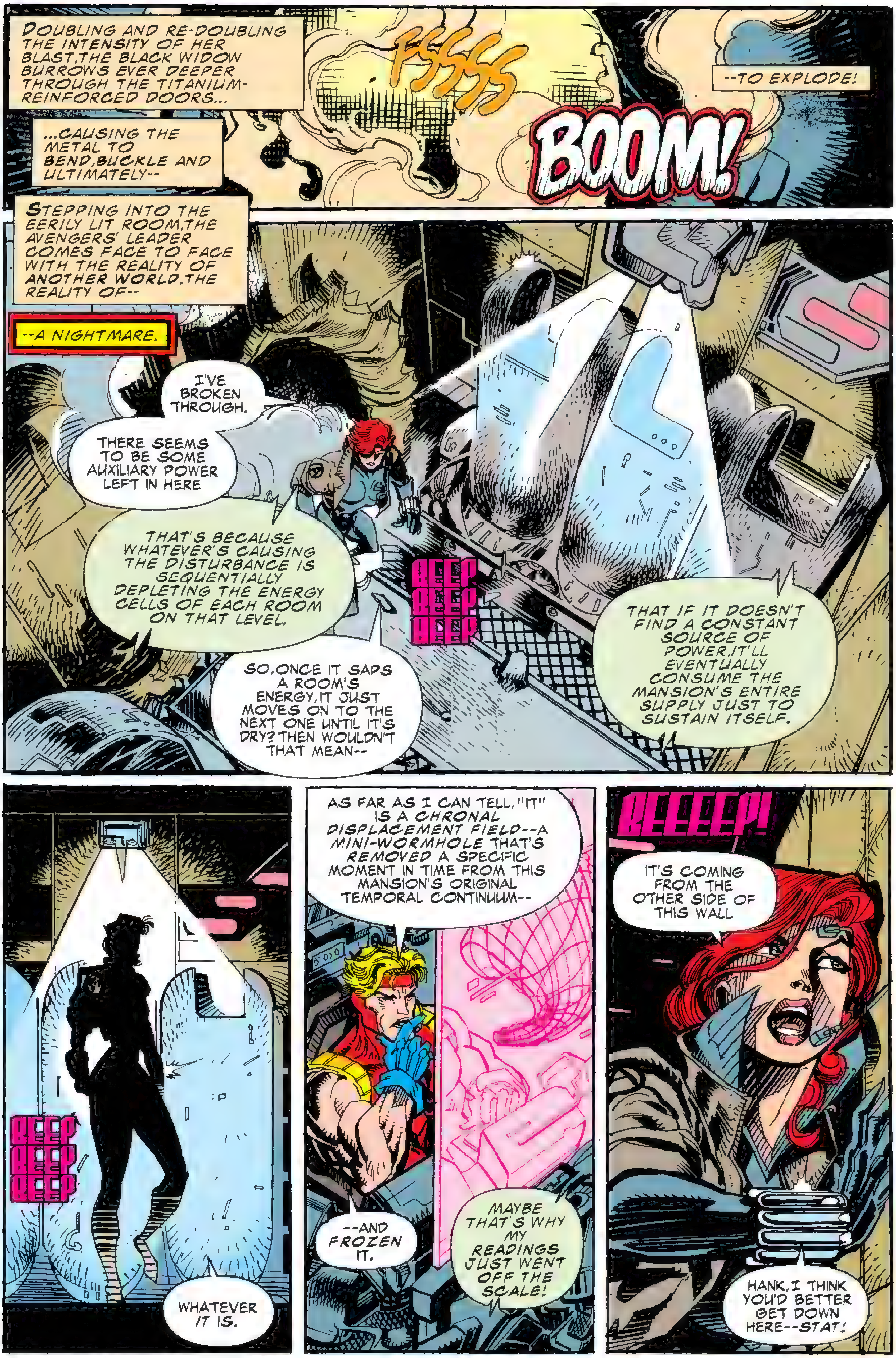
THE DOOR:
SYNCHRONICITY, I

BEN RAAB writer **JEFF MATSUDA** penciler **KLAUS JANSON** inker
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS letterer **KEVIN TINSLEY** colorist **RALPH MACCHIO** editor
MARK GRUENWALD-doorman

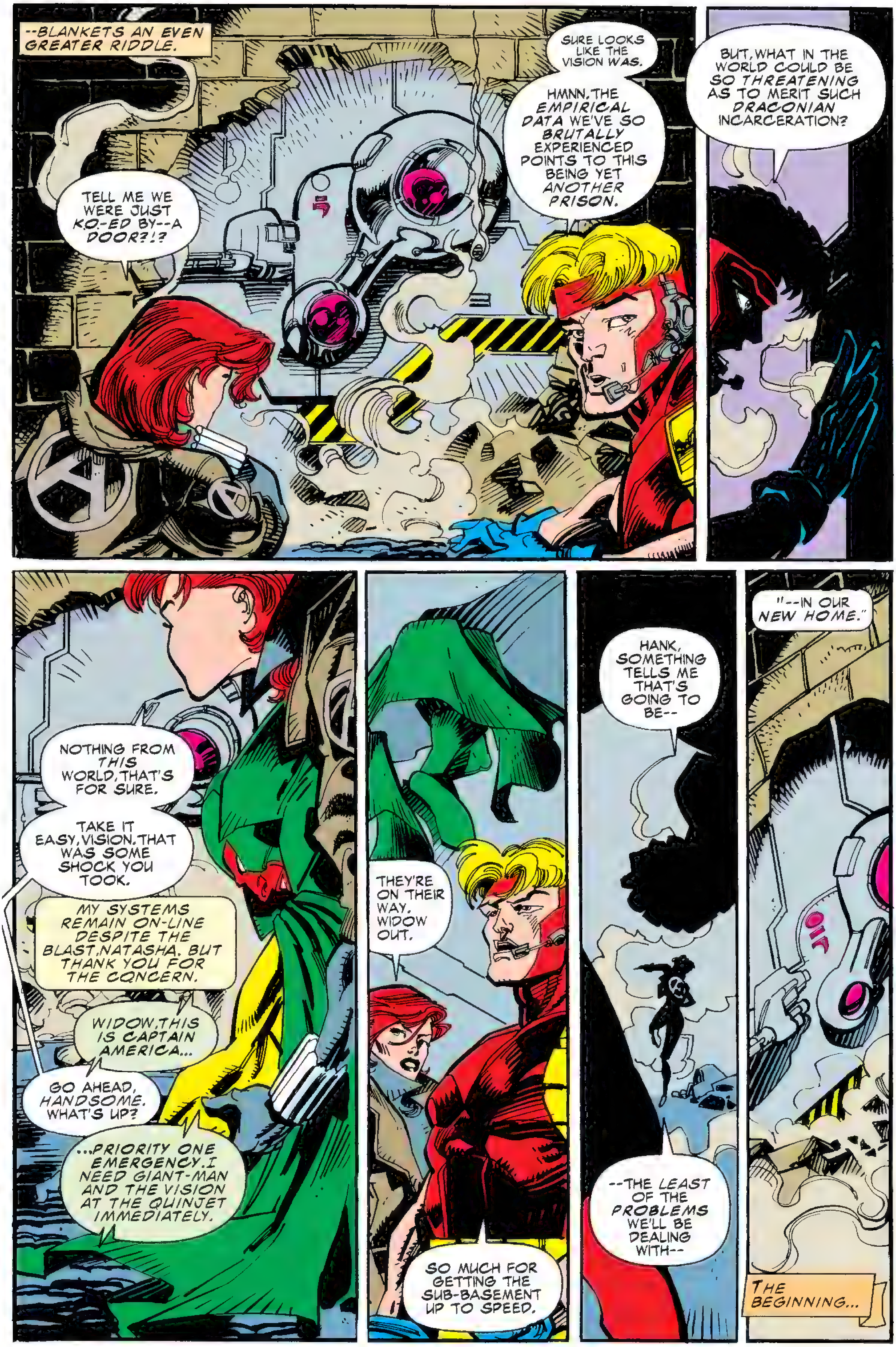

IT'S UNCANNY HOW SIMILAR THIS BUILDING IS TO THE ORIGINAL...
...RIGHT DOWN TO THE TITANIUM ALLOY DOORS WHICH--
CRRREEEAAAK!
--UNGFHH!--
--HAVE ALWAYS BEEN... SOOO EASY TO PRY--
--OPEN!!!
BUT SINCE THIS IS SOMEBODY ELSE'S HEADQUARTERS
--THERE'S BOUND TO BE MORE THAN A FEW SURPRISES WAITING FOR US.
I'M IN, HANK. WHAT'S NEXT?
SCAN THE AREA FOR POSSIBLE SECONDARY POWER TERMINALS AND SEE IF YOU CAN ACTIVATE THEIR MAINFRAMES.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
ACCORDING TO MY SENSORS, AND THE SCHEMATICS OF THE OLD HOMESTEAD, YOU SHOULD BE STANDING RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF--
THE CONFERENCE ROOM!


THE CENTRAL COMPUTER ROOM...
IT'S ALMOST AN EXACT REPLICA OF OUR OLD MEETING HALL. THIS IS EERIE.
AND PRECISELY WHAT I EXPECTED!
IT APPEARS THAT, IN ADDITION TO LIVING CONDITION AESTHETICS, THE PREVIOUS TENANTS SHARED A SIMILAR SENSE OF A HEADQUARTERS' STRUCTURAL FUNCTION--
ACCESS DENIED
--NOT AGAIN!!!
AS WELL AS INTERNAL SECURITY.
PRECISELY WHAT I EXPECTED.
STILL NO LUCK WITH THOSE ENCRYPTED FILES, HUH?
I'M NOT SURPRISED. FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS DOWN HERE, I'D VENTURE A GUESS THAT OUR PREDCESSORS--
--WHOEVER THEY MAY HAVE BEEN--
--HAD REASON TO BE CAUTIOUS.
IF NOT TIDY.
WELL, NOW. WHAT'S THIS?
FOUND SOMETHING?
BEEP BEEP BEEP
PERHAPS.


"HOLDING AREA?" COULD BE SOME SORT OF BRIG.
INTERESTING. GUESS THEY LIKED TO KEEP THEIR ENEMIES RIGHT WHERE THEY COULD SEE THEM. THIS COULD COME IN HANDY.
BEEP BEEP BEEP
DON'T TELL ME YOU'D ACTUALLY WANT TO KEEP SOMEONE LIKE-- OH, LET'S SAY PROCTOR-- LOCKED UP IN OUR OWN BASEMENT?
OR MAYBE NOT.
VERY WELL, THEN. LET'S SEE WHAT'S INSIDE. COMPUTER--!
--AUTHORITY ACCESS CODE #101310-BW. CLERANCE LEVEL NINE.
LEVEL NINE SECURITY CLEARANCE IS NOT A RECOGNIZED STATUS CODE FOR ACCESS TO HOLDING AREA.
HOLDIN AREA
UH OH. LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY HERE DOESN'T LEAD THE AVENGERS IN ANOTHER REALITY.
CUTE, HANK. DO ME A FAVOR AND JUST KEEP HACKING INTO THOSE FILES-- PLEEEEASE.
MY WRIST-SENSOR TELLS ME THAT THE CAUSE OF THE POWER FLUX MAY BE LOCATED--
BEEP BEEP BEEP
--URRRNNFF--
--ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DOOR.
SHZAAAP!
AND I INTEND TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT IT IS!


DOUBLING AND RE-DOUBLING THE INTENSITY OF HER BLAST, THE BLACK WIDOW BURROWS EVER DEEPER THROUGH THE TITANIUM-REINFORCED DOORS...
...CAUSING THE METAL TO BEND, BUCKLE AND ULTIMATELY--
FSSSS
--TO EXPLODE!
BOOM!
STEPPING INTO THE EERILY LIT ROOM, THE AVENGERS' LEADER COMES FACE TO FACE WITH THE REALITY OF ANOTHER WORLD. THE REALITY OF--
--A NIGHTMARE.
I'VE BROKEN THROUGH.
THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME AUXILIARY POWER LEFT IN HERE
THAT'S BECAUSE WHATEVER'S CAUSING THE DISTURBANCE IS SEQUENTIALLY DEPLETING THE ENERGY CELLS OF EACH ROOM ON THAT LEVEL.
BEEP BEEP BEEP
SO, ONCE IT SAPS A ROOM'S ENERGY, IT JUST MOVES ON TO THE NEXT ONE UNTIL IT'S DRY? THEN WOULDN'T THAT MEAN--
THAT IF IT DOESN'T FIND A CONSTANT SOURCE OF POWER, IT'LL EVENTUALLY CONSUME THE MANSION'S ENTIRE SUPPLY JUST TO SUSTAIN ITSELF.
BEEP BEEP BEEP
WHATEVER IT IS.
AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, "IT" IS A CHRONAL DISPLACEMENT FIELD--A MINI-WORMHOLE THAT'S REMOVED A SPECIFIC MOMENT IN TIME FROM THIS MANSION'S ORIGINAL TEMPORAL CONTINUUM--
--AND FROZEN IT.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY MY READINGS JUST WENT OFF THE SCALE!
BEEEEP!
IT'S COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS WALL
HANK, I THINK YOU'D BETTER GET DOWN HERE--STAT!

A SHORT TIME LATER...
THIS TRULY A UNIQUE MYSTERY.
I'M TELLING YOU VISION. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS.
MY INSTRUMENTS ALL INDICATE THAT THERE'S AN INCREDIBLY DENSE CHUNK OF DISPLACED TIME BEHIND THIS WALL!
YOU SURE THAT'S NOT JUST SEWAGE? AFTER ALL, THAT'S WHERE THE EAST RIVER IS SUPPOSED TO BE.
THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD "TEST THE WATERS." JUST TO MAKE CERTAIN...
BUT THE MOMENT THE SYNTEZOID AVENGER'S INTANGIBLE HAND PASSES THROUGH THE BRICKS...
ZZWHOOOW!
...HE IS VIOLENTLY REPULSED BY A FORCE SO POWERFUL...
...IT SETS IN MOTION A DEVASTATING CHAIN REACTION!
BA-BA-BOOM
AS THE DUST SETTLES, THE FALLEN AVENGERS BRACE THEMSELVES FOR A SECOND ASSAULT FROM THEIR ENIGMATIC "ASSAILANT"--
--ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THE UNRAVELING MYSTERY--


--BLANKETS AN EVEN GREATER RIDDLE.
TELL ME WE WERE JUST KO-ED BY--A DOOR?!?
SURE LOOKS LIKE THE VISION WAS.
HMNN. THE EMPIRICAL DATA WE'VE SO BRUTALLY EXPERIENCED POINTS TO THIS BEING YET ANOTHER PRISON.
BUT, WHAT IN THE WORLD COULD BE SO THREATENING AS TO MERIT SUCH DRACONIAN INCARCERATION?
NOTHING FROM THIS WORLD, THAT'S FOR SURE.
TAKE IT EASY, VISION. THAT WAS SOME SHOCK YOU TOOK.
MY SYSTEMS REMAIN ON-LINE DESPITE THE BLAST, NATASHA. BUT THANK YOU FOR THE CONCERN.
WIDOW, THIS IS CAPTAIN AMERICA...
GO AHEAD, HANDSOME. WHAT'S UP?
...PRIORITY ONE EMERGENCY. I NEED GIANT-MAN AND THE VISION AT THE QUINJET IMMEDIATELY.
THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY. WIDOW OUT.
SO MUCH FOR GETTING THE SUB-BASEMENT UP TO SPEED.
HANK, SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT'S GOING TO BE--
--THE LEAST OF THE PROBLEMS WE'LL BE DEALING WITH--
"--IN OUR NEW HOME."
THE BEGINNING...

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GIANT MAN
EPTING PALMER

AVENGERS #379-382 WERE ALSO PUBLISHED AS DELUXE EDITIONS, TITLED *MARVEL DOUBLE FEATURE: AVENGERS/GIANT-MAN*, WHICH INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING FOUR-PART GIANT-MAN ADVENTURE AS A "FLIPBOOK" STORY ON THE REVERSE.

MARVEL COMICS
DOUBLE FEATURE
379
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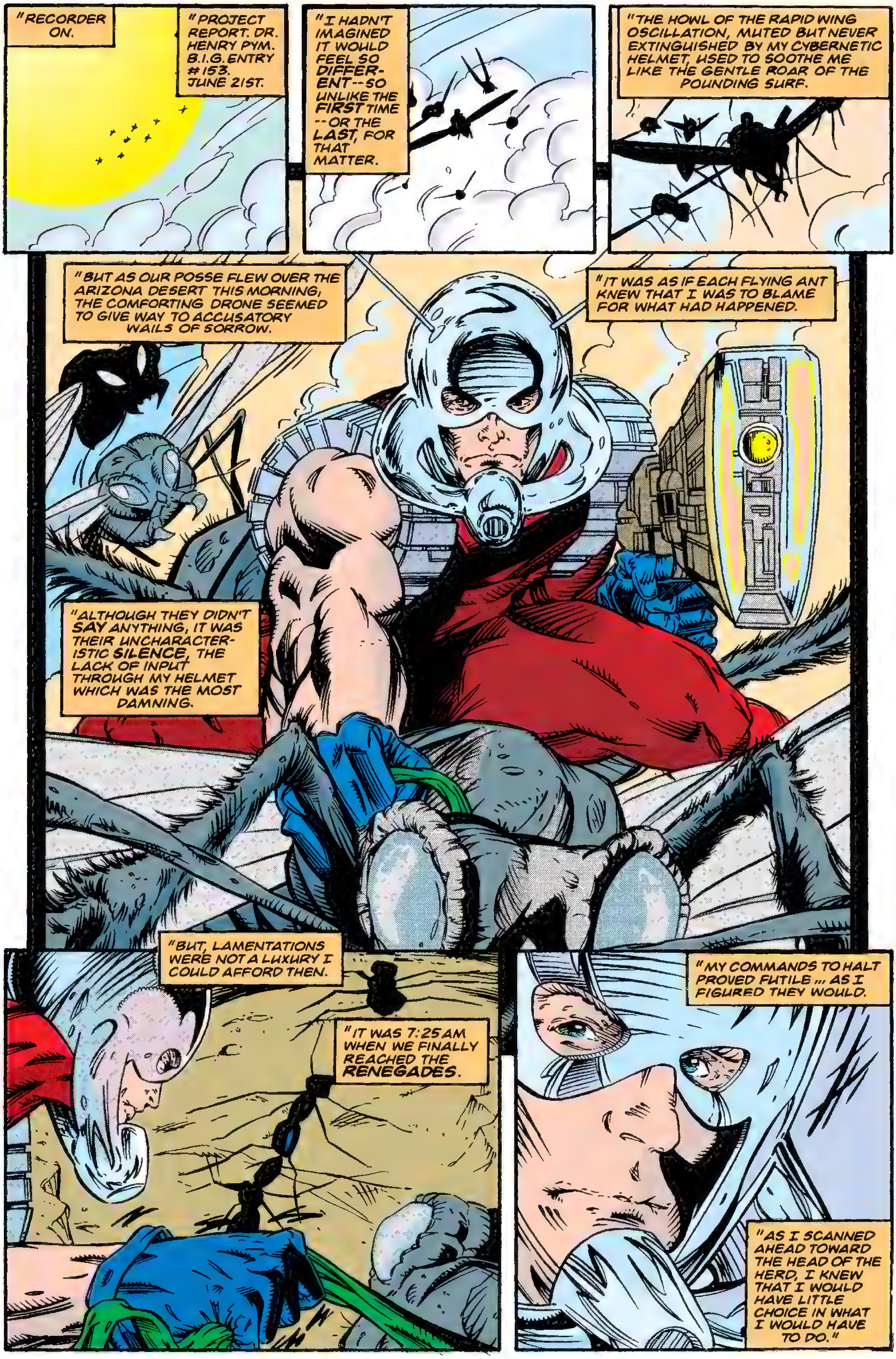
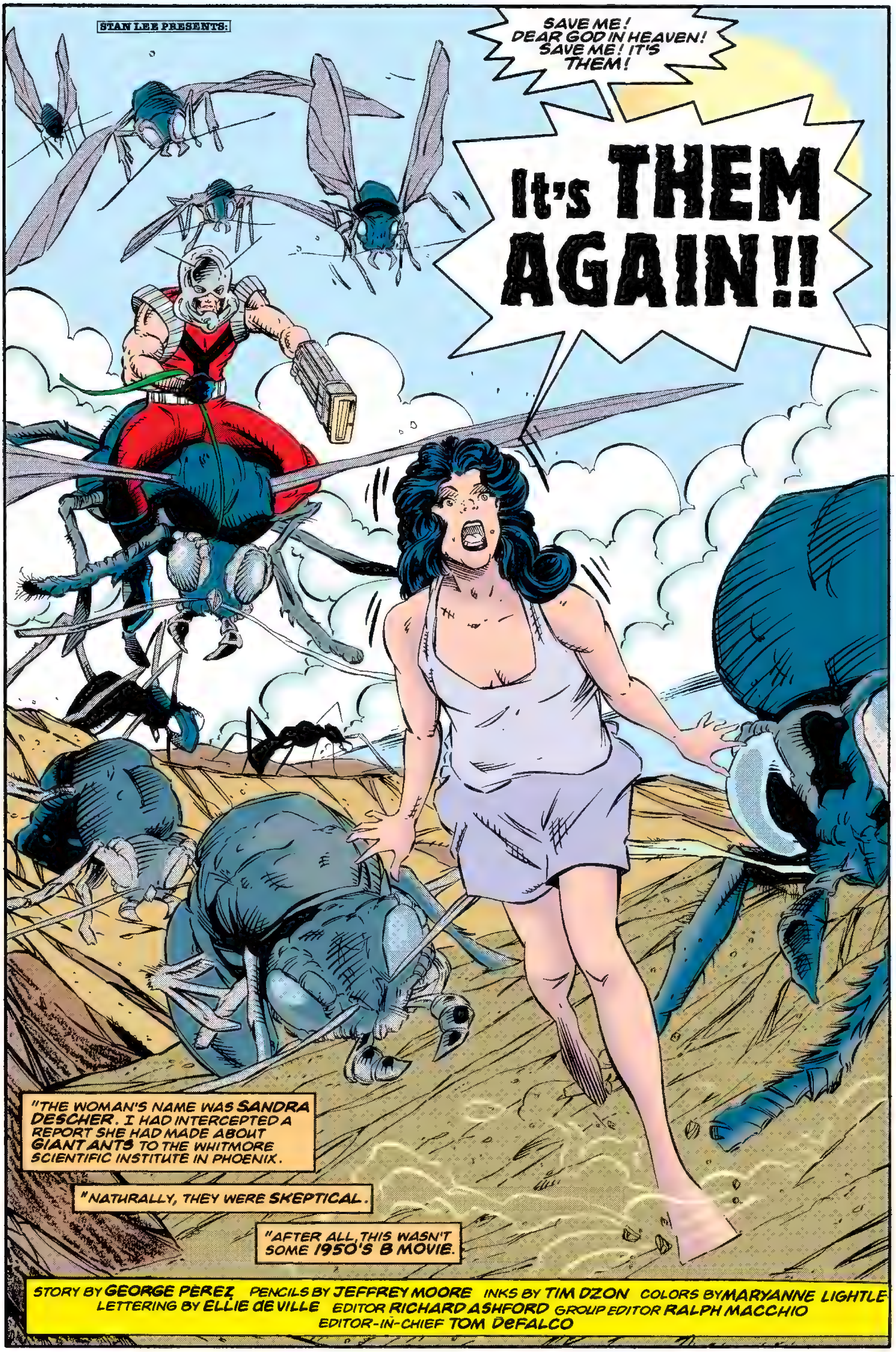
GIANT MAN
AVENGERS


"RECORDER ON.
"PROJECT REPORT. DR. HENRY PYM. B.I.G. ENTRY #153. JUNE 21ST.
"I HADN'T IMAGINED IT WOULD FEEL SO DIFFERENT--SO UNLIKE THE FIRST TIME --OR THE LAST, FOR THAT MATTER.
"THE HOWL OF THE RAPID WING OSCILLATION, MUTED BUT NEVER EXTINGUISHED BY MY CYBERNETIC HELMET, USED TO SOOTHE ME LIKE THE GENTLE ROAR OF THE POUNDING SURF.
"BUT AS OUR POSSE FLEW OVER THE ARIZONA DESERT THIS MORNING, THE COMFORTING DRONE SEEMED TO GIVE WAY TO ACCUSATORY WAILS OF SORROW.
"IT WAS AS IF EACH FLYING ANT KNEW THAT I WAS TO BLAME FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
"ALTHOUGH THEY DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING, IT WAS THEIR UNCHARACTERISTIC SILENCE, THE LACK OF INPUT THROUGH MY HELMET WHICH WAS THE MOST DAMNING.
"BUT, LAMENTATIONS WERE NOT A LUXURY I COULD AFFORD THEN.
"IT WAS 7:25 AM WHEN WE FINALLY REACHED THE RENEGADES.
"MY COMMANDS TO HALT PROVED FUTILE ... AS I FIGURED THEY WOULD.
"AS I SCANNED AHEAD TOWARD THE HEAD OF THE HERD, I KNEW THAT I WOULD HAVE LITTLE CHOICE IN WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO DO."


STAN LEE PRESENTS:
SAVE ME! DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN! SAVE ME! IT'S THEM!
It's THEM AGAIN!!
"THE WOMAN'S NAME WAS SANDRA DESCHER. I HAD INTERCEPTED A REPORT SHE HAD MADE ABOUT GIANT ANTS TO THE WHITMORE SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE IN PHOENIX.
"NATURALLY, THEY WERE SKEPTICAL.
"AFTER ALL, THIS WASN'T SOME 1950'S B MOVIE.

STORY BY GEORGE PÉREZ PENCILS BY JEFFREY MOORE INKS BY TIM DZON COLORS BY MARYANNE LIGHTLE
LETTERING BY ELLIE deVILLE EDITOR RICHARD ASHFORD GROUP EDITOR RALPH MACCHIO
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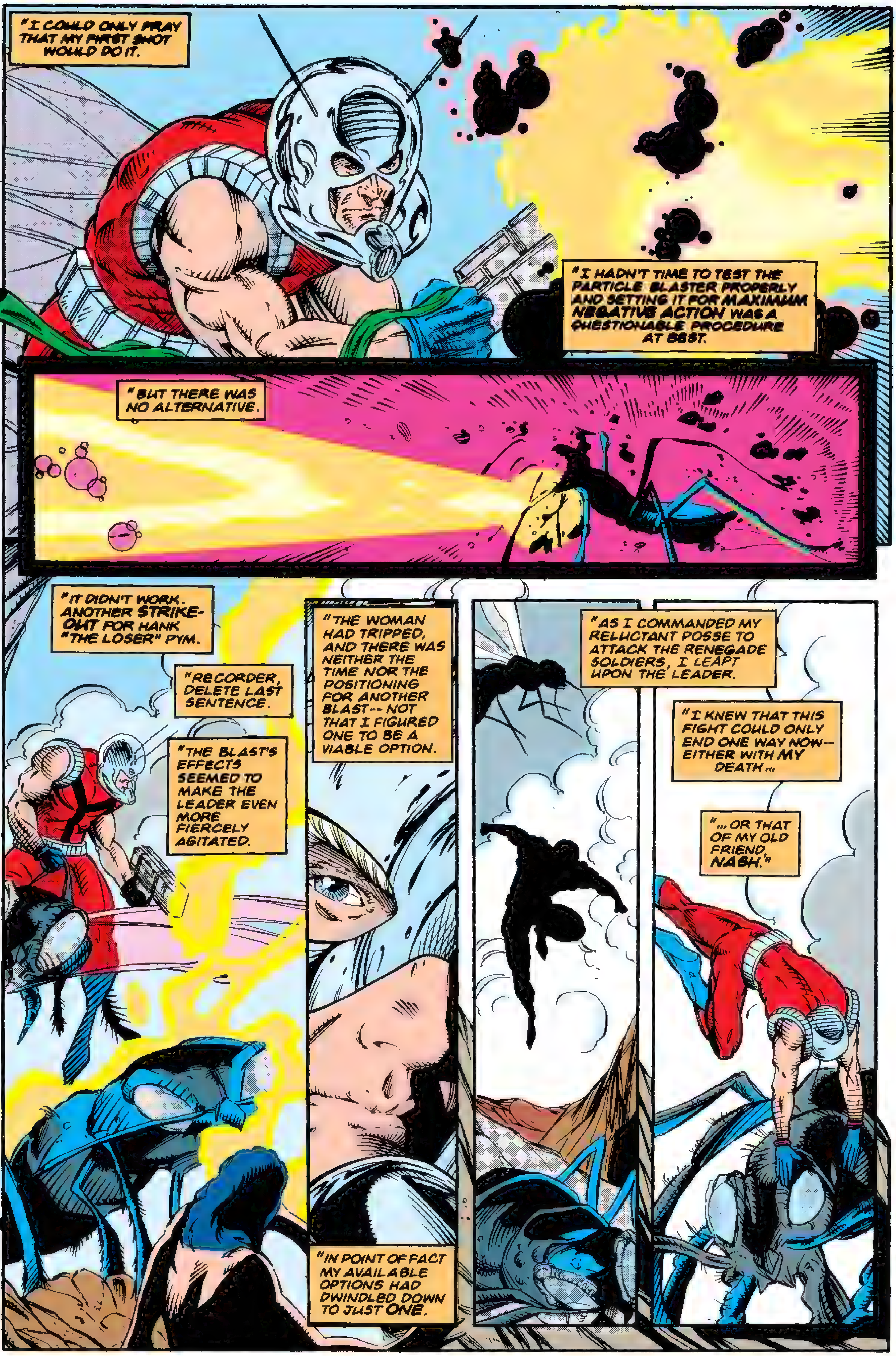
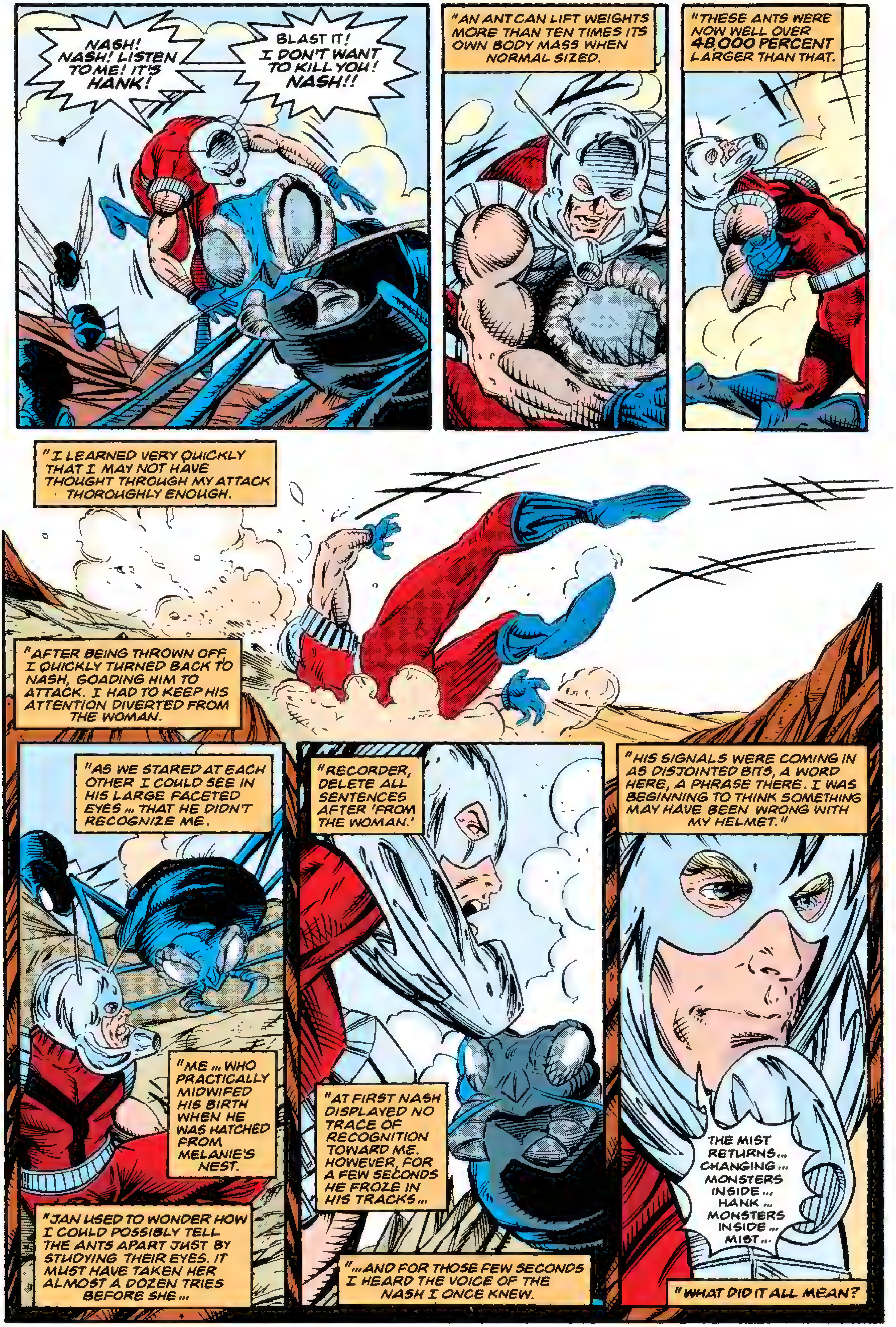
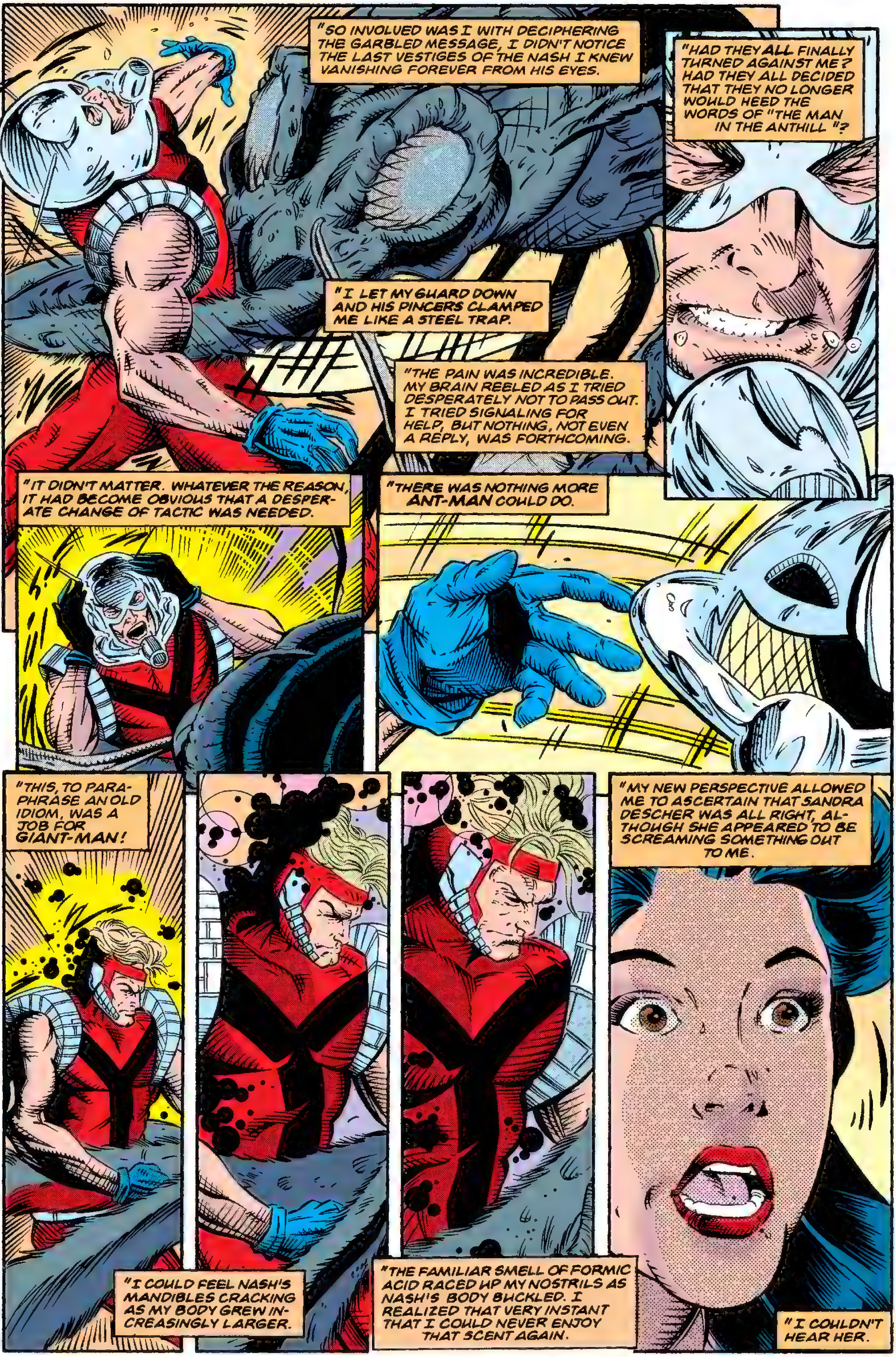
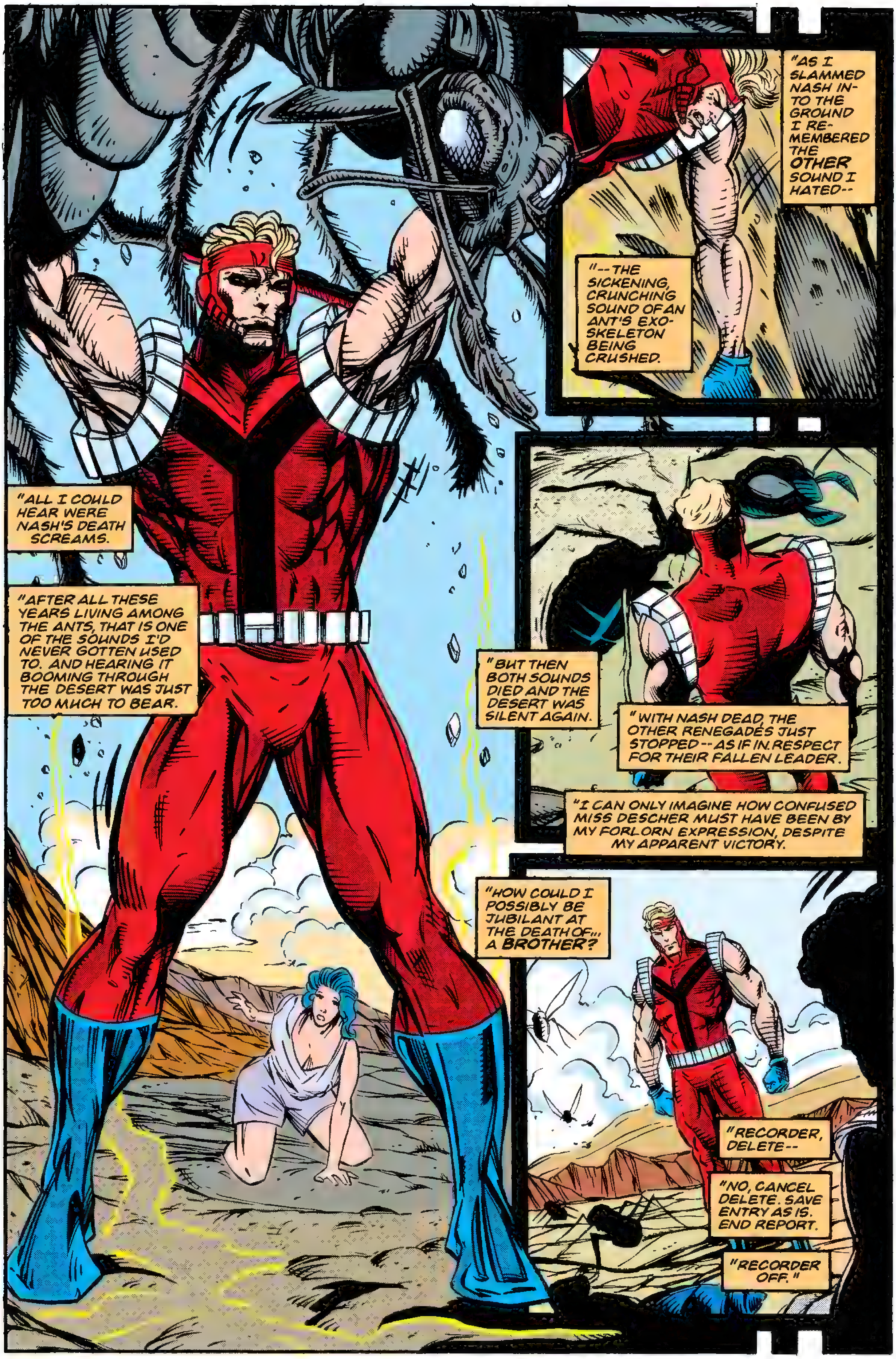
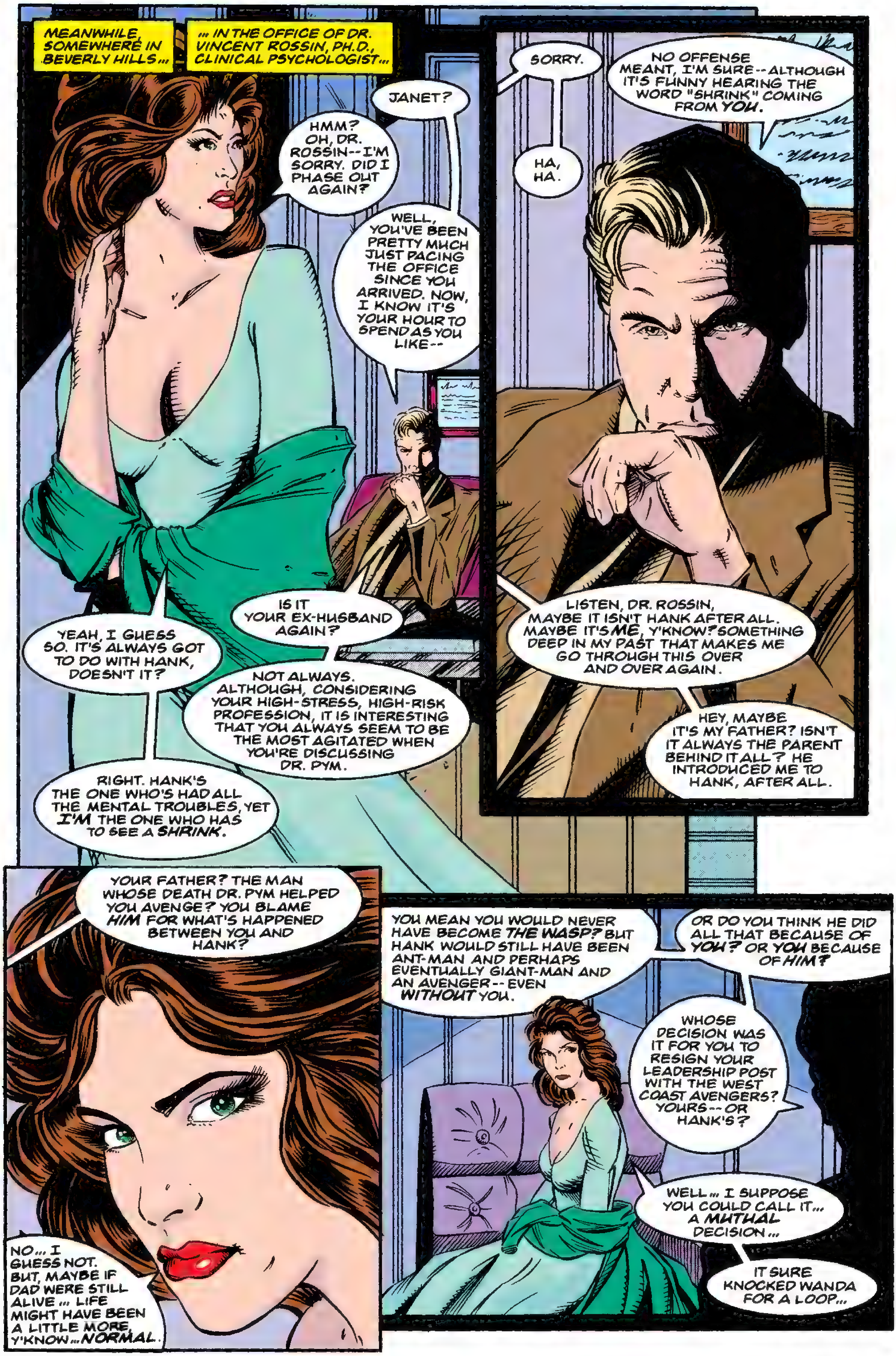
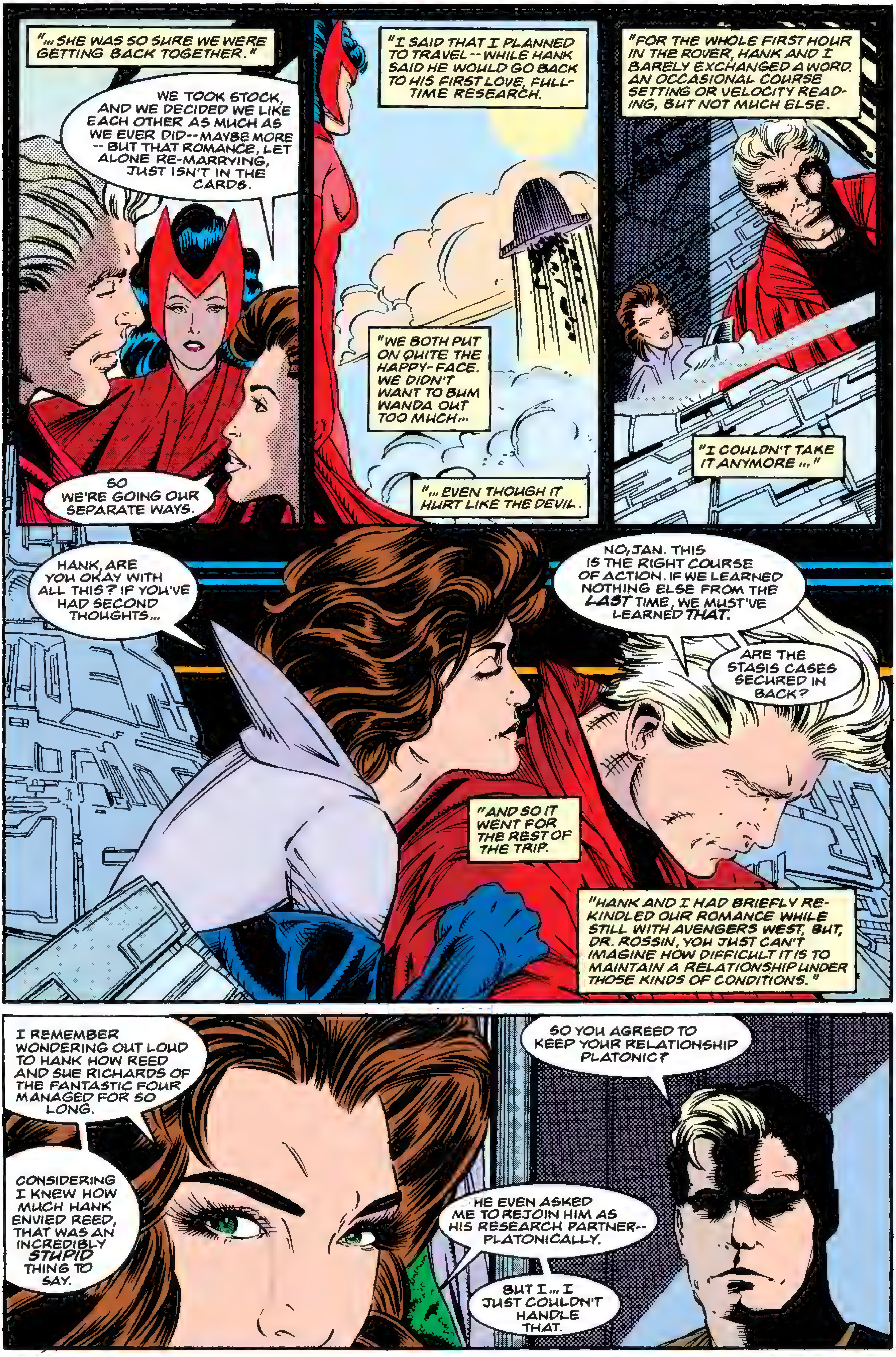

"I COULD ONLY PRAY THAT MY FIRST SHOT WOULD DO IT.
"I HADN'T TIME TO TEST THE PARTICLE BLASTER PROPERLY AND SETTING IT FOR MAXIMUM NEGATIVE ACTION WAS A QUESTIONABLE PROCEDURE AT BEST.
"BUT THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE.
"IT DIDN'T WORK. ANOTHER STRIKE-OUT FOR HANK "THE LOSER" PYM.
"RECORDER, DELETE LAST SENTENCE.
"THE BLAST'S EFFECTS SEEMED TO MAKE THE LEADER EVEN MORE FIERCELY AGITATED.
"THE WOMAN HAD TRIPPED, AND THERE WAS NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE POSITIONING FOR ANOTHER BLAST-- NOT THAT I FIGURED ONE TO BE A VIABLE OPTION.
"IN POINT OF FACT MY AVAILABLE OPTIONS HAD DWINDLED DOWN TO JUST ONE.
"AS I COMMANDED MY RELUCTANT POSSE TO ATTACK THE RENEGADE SOLDIERS, I LEAPT UPON THE LEADER.
"I KNEW THAT THIS FIGHT COULD ONLY END ONE WAY NOW-- EITHER WITH MY DEATH...
"...OR THAT OF MY OLD FRIEND, NASH."

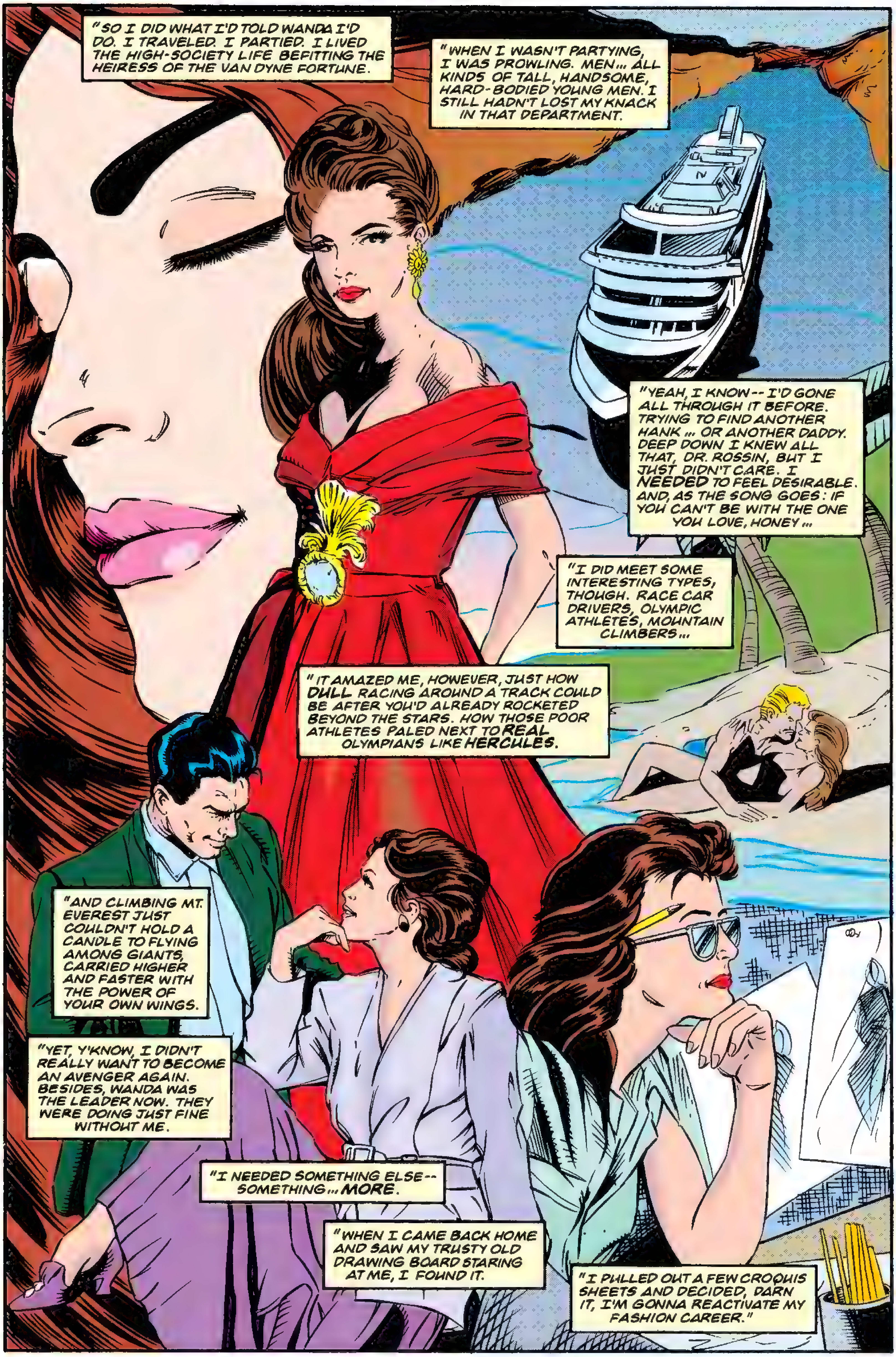

NASH! NASH! LISTEN TO ME! IT'S HANK!
BLAST IT! I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU! NASH!!
"AN ANT CAN LIFT WEIGHTS MORE THAN TEN TIMES ITS OWN BODY MASS WHEN NORMAL SIZED.
"THESE ANTS WERE NOW WELL OVER 48,000 PERCENT LARGER THAN THAT.
"I LEARNED VERY QUICKLY THAT I MAY NOT HAVE THOUGHT THROUGH MY ATTACK THOROUGHLY ENOUGH.
"AFTER BEING THROWN OFF, I QUICKLY TURNED BACK TO NASH, GOADING HIM TO ATTACK. I HAD TO KEEP HIS ATTENTION DIVERTED FROM THE WOMAN.
"AS WE STARED AT EACH OTHER I COULD SEE IN HIS LARGE FACETED EYES ... THAT HE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME.
"ME ... WHO PRACTICALLY MIDWIFED HIS BIRTH WHEN HE WAS HATCHED FROM MELANIE'S NEST.
"JAN USED TO WONDER HOW I COULD POSSIBLY TELL THE ANTS APART JUST BY STUDYING THEIR EYES. IT MUST HAVE TAKEN HER ALMOST A DOZEN TRIES BEFORE SHE ...
"RECORDER, DELETE ALL SENTENCES AFTER 'FROM THE WOMAN.'
"AT FIRST NASH DISPLAYED NO TRACE OF RECOGNITION TOWARD ME. HOWEVER, FOR A FEW SECONDS HE FROZE IN HIS TRACKS ...
"... AND FOR THOSE FEW SECONDS I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE NASH I ONCE KNEW.
"HIS SIGNALS WERE COMING IN AS DISJOINTED BITS, A WORD HERE, A PHRASE THERE. I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK SOMETHING MAY HAVE BEEN WRONG WITH MY HELMET."
THE MIST RETURNS ... CHANGING ... MONSTERS INSIDE ... HANK ... MONSTERS INSIDE ... MIST ...
"WHAT DID IT ALL MEAN?

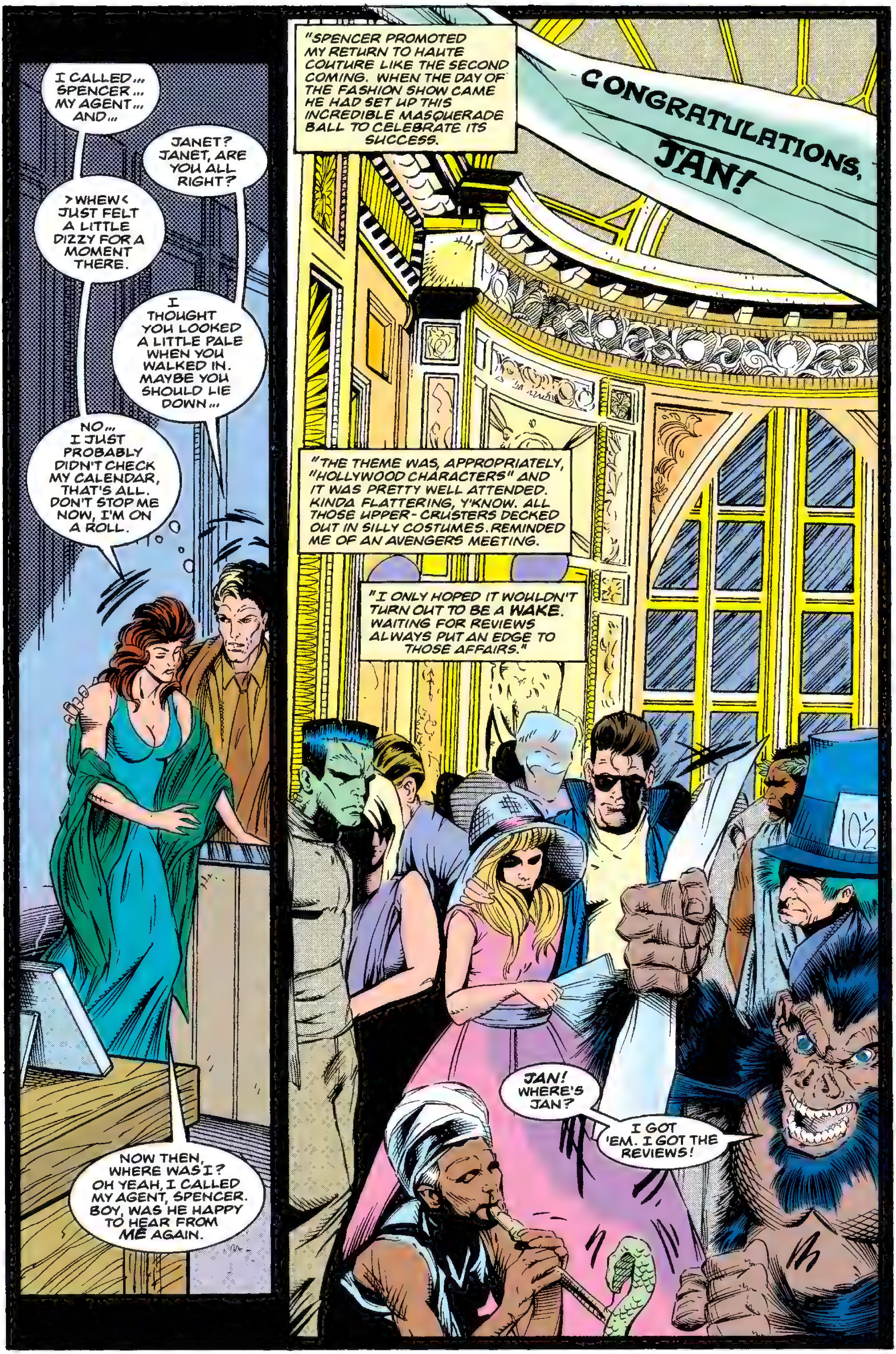

"SO INVOLVED WAS I WITH DECIPHERING THE GARBLED MESSAGE, I DIDN'T NOTICE THE LAST VESTIGES OF THE NASH I KNEW VANISHING FOREVER FROM HIS EYES.
"I LET MY GUARD DOWN AND HIS PINCERS CLAMPED ME LIKE A STEEL TRAP.
"THE PAIN WAS INCREDIBLE. MY BRAIN REELED AS I TRIED DESPERATELY NOT TO PASS OUT. I TRIED SIGNALING FOR HELP, BUT NOTHING, NOT EVEN A REPLY, WAS FORTHCOMING.
"HAD THEY ALL FINALLY TURNED AGAINST ME? HAD THEY ALL DECIDED THAT THEY NO LONGER WOULD HEED THE WORDS OF "THE MAN IN THE ANTHILL"?
"IT DIDN'T MATTER. WHATEVER THE REASON, IT HAD BECOME OBVIOUS THAT A DESPERATE CHANGE OF TACTIC WAS NEEDED.
"THERE WAS NOTHING MORE ANT-MAN COULD DO.
"THIS, TO PARAPHRASE AN OLD IDIOM, WAS A JOB FOR GIANT-MAN!
"I COULD FEEL NASH'S MANDIBLES CRACKING AS MY BODY GREW INCREASINGLY LARGER.
"THE FAMILIAR SMELL OF FORMIC ACID RACED UP MY NOSTRILS AS NASH'S BODY BUCKLED. I REALIZED THAT VERY INSTANT THAT I COULD NEVER ENJOY THAT SCENT AGAIN.
"MY NEW PERSPECTIVE ALLOWED ME TO ASCERTAIN THAT SANDRA DESCHER WAS ALL RIGHT, ALTHOUGH SHE APPEARED TO BE SCREAMING SOMETHING OUT TO ME.
"I COULDN'T HEAR HER.

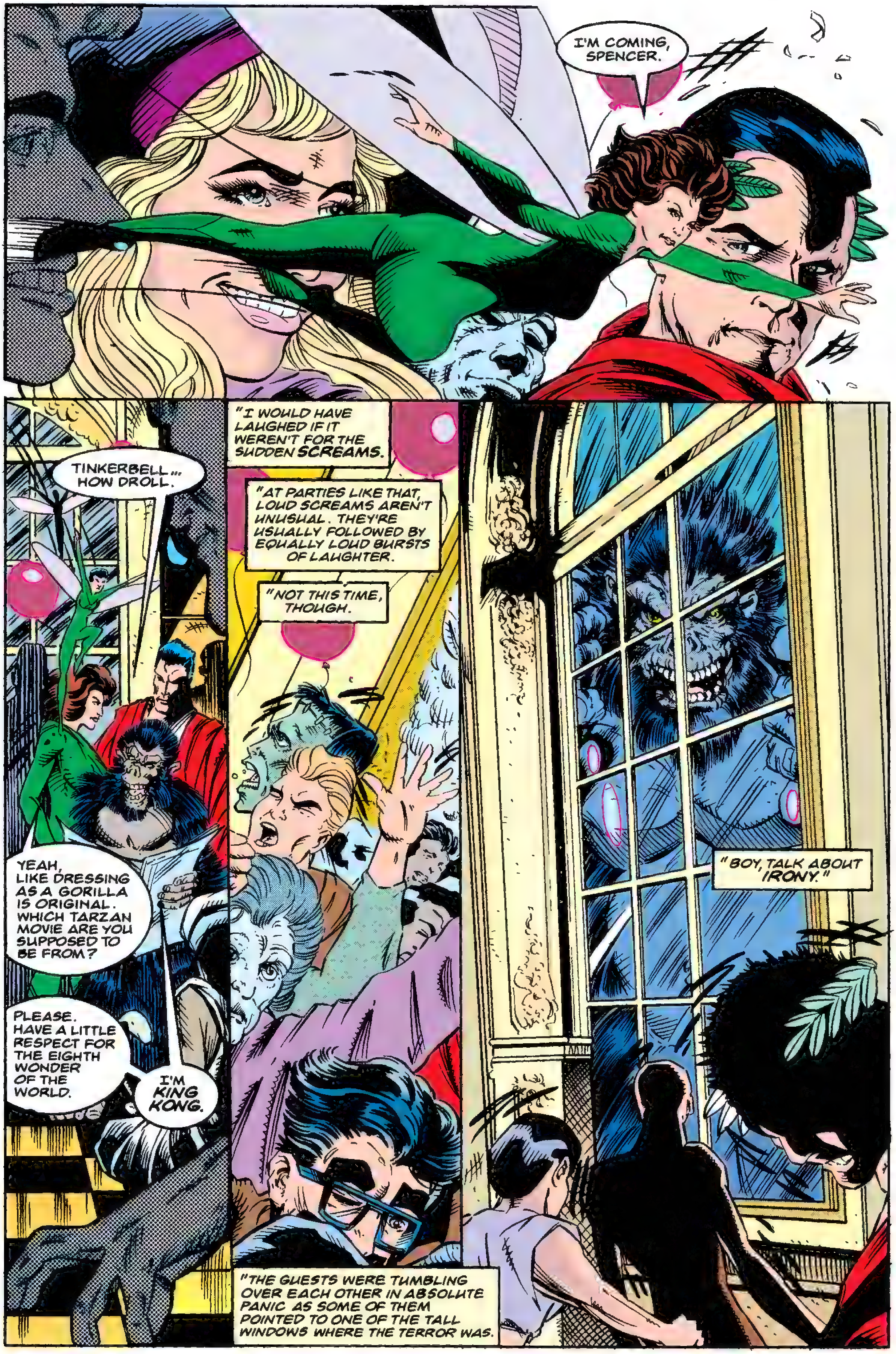

"ALL I COULD HEAR WERE NASH'S DEATH SCREAMS.
"AFTER ALL THESE YEARS LIVING AMONG THE ANTS, THAT IS ONE OF THE SOUNDS I'D NEVER GOTTEN USED TO. AND HEARING IT BOOMING THROUGH THE DESERT WAS JUST TOO MUCH TO BEAR.
"AS I SLAMMED NASH INTO THE GROUND I REMEMBERED THE **OTHER** SOUND I HATED--
"--THE SICKENING, CRUNCHING SOUND OF AN ANT'S EXOSKELETON BEING CRUSHED.
"BUT THEN BOTH SOUNDS DIED AND THE DESERT WAS SILENT AGAIN.
"WITH NASH DEAD, THE OTHER RENEGADES JUST STOPPED -- AS IF IN RESPECT FOR THEIR FALLEN LEADER.
"I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HOW CONFUSED MISS DESCHER MUST HAVE BEEN BY MY FORLORN EXPRESSION, DESPITE MY APPARENT VICTORY.
"HOW COULD I POSSIBLY BE JUBILANT AT THE DEATH OF... A **BROTHER**?
"RECORDER, DELETE--
"NO, CANCEL DELETE. SAVE ENTRY AS IS. END REPORT.
"RECORDER OFF."

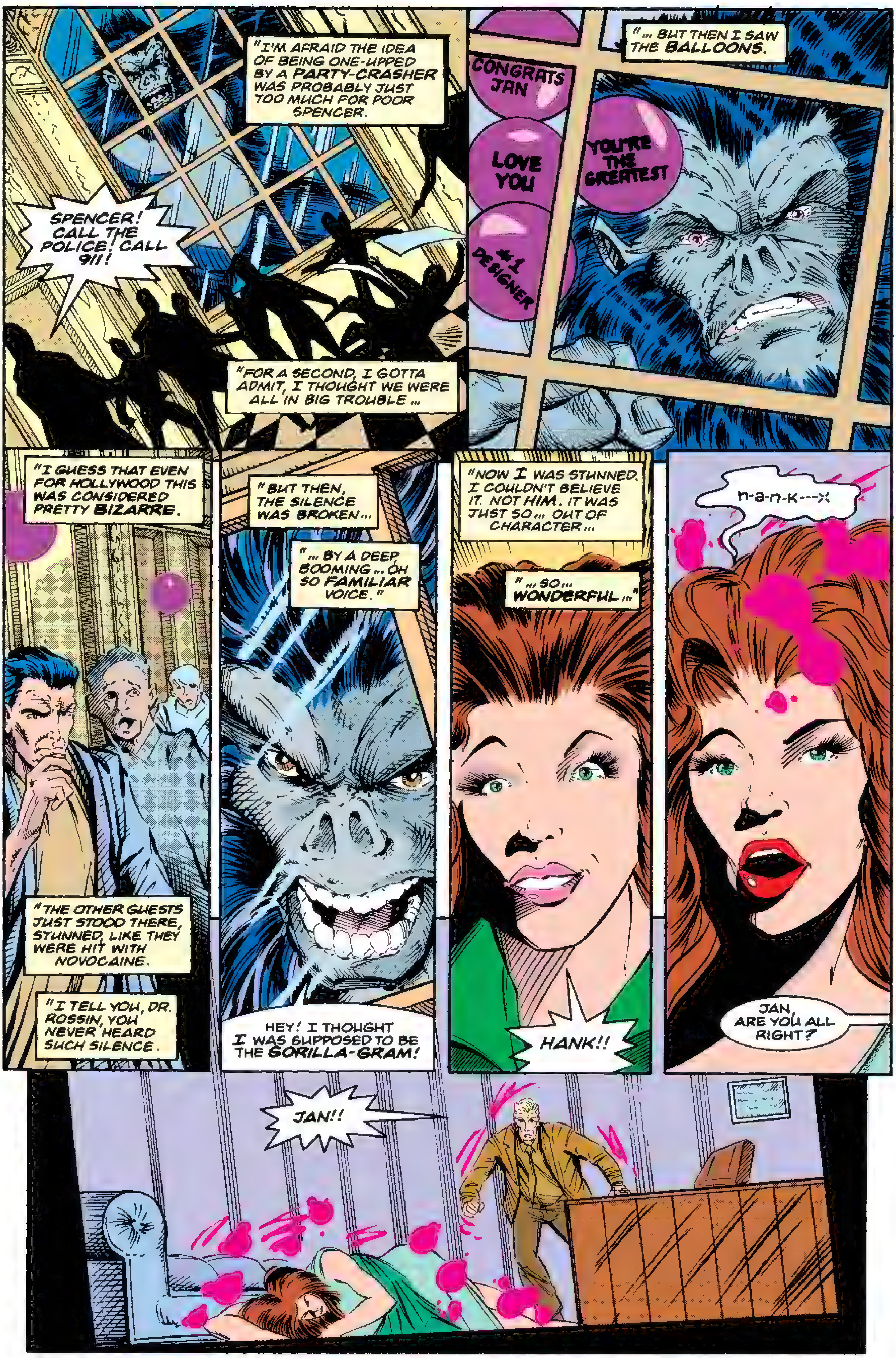

MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE IN BEVERLY HILLS...
...IN THE OFFICE OF DR. VINCENT ROSSIN, PH.D., CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST...
JANET?
HMM? OH, DR. ROSSIN--I'M SORRY. DID I PHASE OUT AGAIN?
WELL, YOU'VE BEEN PRETTY MUCH JUST PACING THE OFFICE SINCE YOU ARRIVED. NOW, I KNOW IT'S YOUR HOUR TO SPEND AS YOU LIKE--
IS IT YOUR EX-HUSBAND AGAIN?
YEAH, I GUESS SO. IT'S ALWAYS GOT TO DO WITH HANK, DOESN'T IT?
NOT ALWAYS. ALTHOUGH, CONSIDERING YOUR HIGH-STRESS, HIGH-RISK PROFESSION, IT IS INTERESTING THAT YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO BE THE MOST AGITATED WHEN YOU'RE DISCUSSING DR. PYM.
RIGHT. HANK'S THE ONE WHO'S HAD ALL THE MENTAL TROUBLES, YET I'M THE ONE WHO HAS TO SEE A SHRINK.
SORRY.
HA, HA.
NO OFFENSE MEANT, I'M SURE--ALTHOUGH IT'S FUNNY HEARING THE WORD "SHRINK" COMING FROM YOU.
LISTEN, DR. ROSSIN, MAYBE IT ISN'T HANK AFTER ALL. MAYBE IT'S ME, Y'KNOW? SOMETHING DEEP IN MY PAST THAT MAKES ME GO THROUGH THIS OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
HEY, MAYBE IT'S MY FATHER? ISN'T IT ALWAYS THE PARENT BEHIND IT ALL? HE INTRODUCED ME TO HANK, AFTER ALL.
YOUR FATHER? THE MAN WHOSE DEATH DR. PYM HELPED YOU AVENGE? YOU BLAME HIM FOR WHAT'S HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND HANK?
NO... I GUESS NOT. BUT, MAYBE IF DAD WERE STILL ALIVE... LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A LITTLE MORE, Y'KNOW... NORMAL.
YOU MEAN YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE BECOME THE WASP? BUT HANK WOULD STILL HAVE BEEN ANT-MAN AND PERHAPS EVENTUALLY GIANT-MAN AND AN AVENGER--EVEN WITHOUT YOU.
OR DO YOU THINK HE DID ALL THAT BECAUSE OF YOU? OR YOU BECAUSE OF HIM?
WHOSE DECISION WAS IT FOR YOU TO RESIGN YOUR LEADERSHIP POST WITH THE WEST COAST AVENGERS? YOURS--OR HANK'S?
WELL... I SUPPOSE YOU COULD CALL IT... A MUTUAL DECISION...
IT SURE KNOCKED WANDA FOR A LOOP...

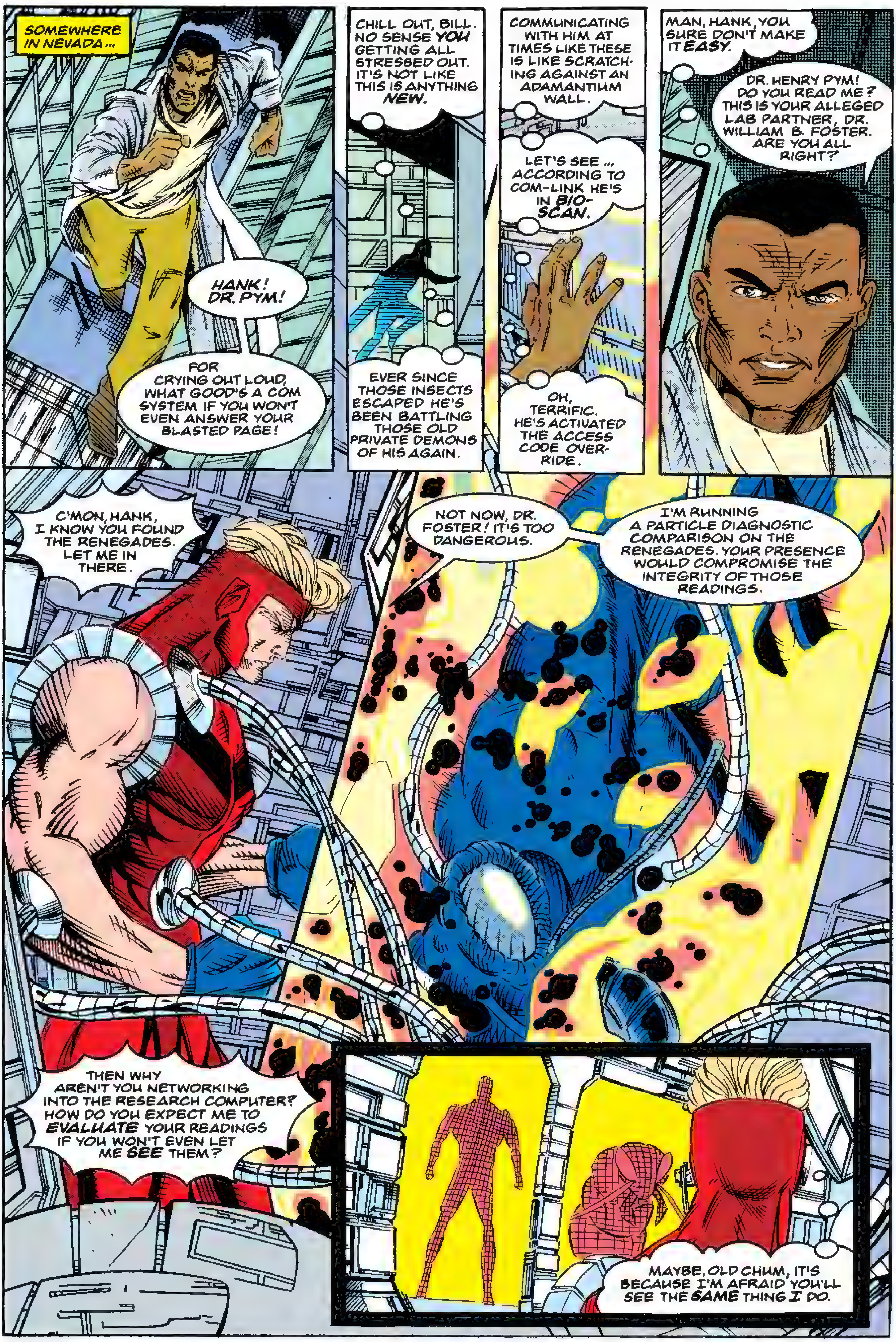

"...SHE WAS SO SURE WE WERE GETTING BACK TOGETHER."
WE TOOK STOCK, AND WE DECIDED WE LIKE EACH OTHER AS MUCH AS WE EVER DID--MAYBE MORE --BUT THAT ROMANCE, LET ALONE RE-MARRYING, JUST ISN'T IN THE CARDS.
SO WE'RE GOING OUR SEPARATE WAYS.
"I SAID THAT I PLANNED TO TRAVEL--WHILE HANK SAID HE WOULD GO BACK TO HIS FIRST LOVE, FULL-TIME RESEARCH.
"WE BOTH PUT ON QUITE THE HAPPY-FACE. WE DIDN'T WANT TO BUM WANDA OUT TOO MUCH...
"...EVEN THOUGH IT HURT LIKE THE DEVIL.
"FOR THE WHOLE FIRST HOUR IN THE ROVER, HANK AND I BARELY EXCHANGED A WORD. AN OCCASIONAL COURSE SETTING OR VELOCITY READING, BUT NOT MUCH ELSE.
"I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE..."
HANK, ARE YOU OKAY WITH ALL THIS? IF YOU'VE HAD SECOND THOUGHTS...
NO, JAN. THIS IS THE RIGHT COURSE OF ACTION. IF WE LEARNED NOTHING ELSE FROM THE *LAST* TIME, WE MUST'VE LEARNED *THAT.*
ARE THE STASIS CASES SECURED IN BACK?
"AND SO IT WENT FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP.
"HANK AND I HAD BRIEFLY REKINDLED OUR ROMANCE WHILE STILL WITH AVENGERS WEST, BUT, DR. ROSSIN, YOU JUST CAN'T IMAGINE HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP UNDER THOSE KINDS OF CONDITIONS."
I REMEMBER WONDERING OUT LOUD TO HANK HOW REED AND SUE RICHARDS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR MANAGED FOR SO LONG.
CONSIDERING I KNEW HOW MUCH HANK ENVIED REED, THAT WAS AN INCREDIBLY *STUPID* THING TO SAY.
SO YOU AGREED TO KEEP YOUR RELATIONSHIP PLATONIC?
HE EVEN ASKED ME TO REJOIN HIM AS HIS RESEARCH PARTNER-- PLATONICALLY.
BUT I... I JUST COULDN'T HANDLE THAT.

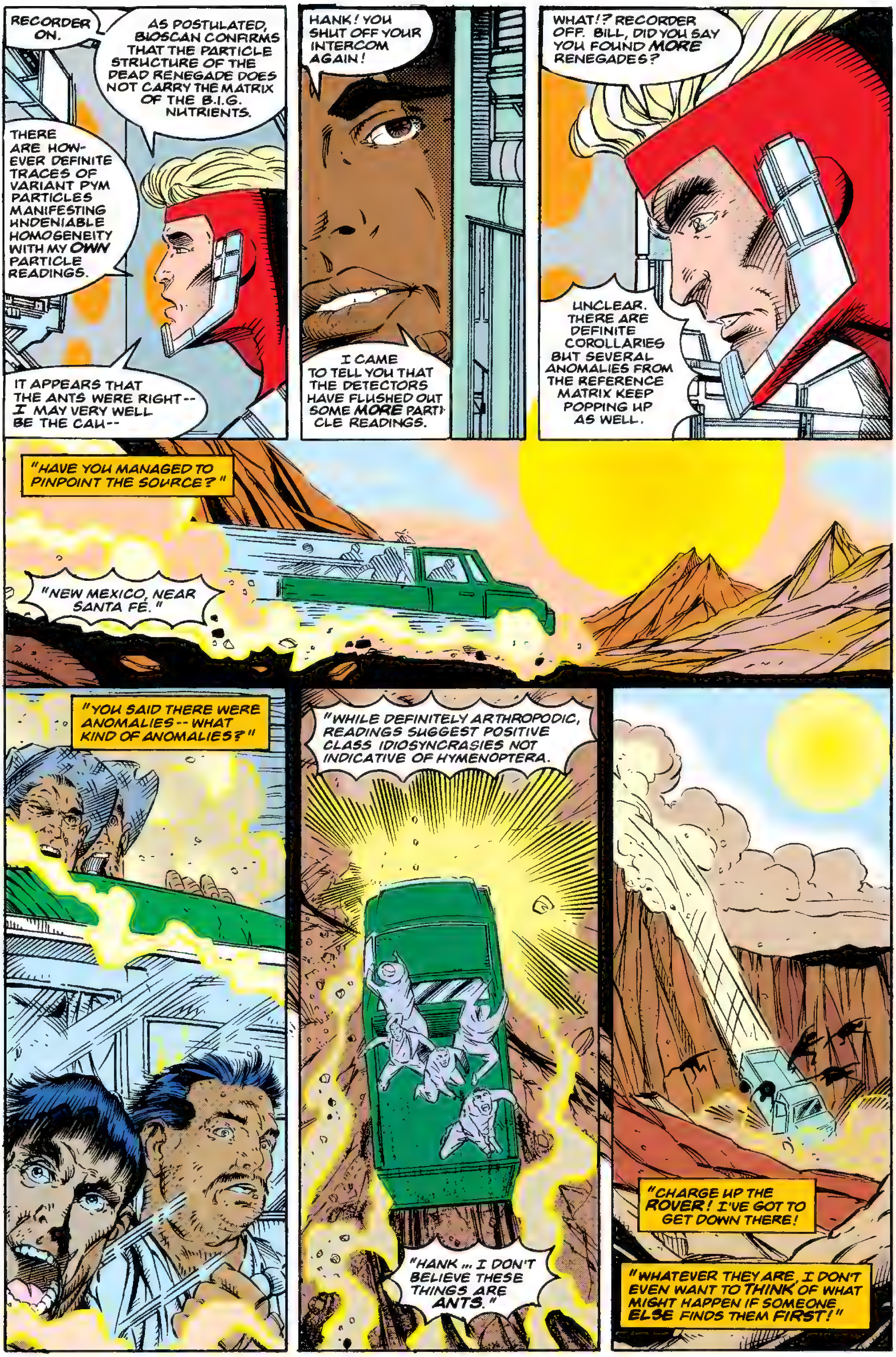

"SO I DID WHAT I'D TOLD WANDA I'D DO. I TRAVELED. I PARTIED. I LIVED THE HIGH-SOCIETY LIFE BEFITTING THE HEIRESS OF THE VAN DYNE FORTUNE.
"WHEN I WASN'T PARTYING, I WAS PROWLING. MEN... ALL KINDS OF TALL, HANDSOME, HARD-BODIED YOUNG MEN. I STILL HADN'T LOST MY KNACK IN THAT DEPARTMENT.
"YEAH, I KNOW -- I'D GONE ALL THROUGH IT BEFORE. TRYING TO FIND ANOTHER HANK... OR ANOTHER DADDY. DEEP DOWN I KNEW ALL THAT, DR. ROSSIN, BUT I JUST DIDN'T CARE. I NEEDED TO FEEL DESIRABLE. AND, AS THE SONG GOES: IF YOU CAN'T BE WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE, HONEY...
"I DID MEET SOME INTERESTING TYPES, THOUGH. RACE CAR DRIVERS, OLYMPIC ATHLETES, MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS...
"IT AMAZED ME, HOWEVER, JUST HOW DULL RACING AROUND A TRACK COULD BE AFTER YOU'D ALREADY ROCKETED BEYOND THE STARS. HOW THOSE POOR ATHLETES PALED NEXT TO REAL OLYMPIANS LIKE HERCULES.
"AND CLIMBING MT. EVEREST JUST COULDN'T HOLD A CANDLE TO FLYING AMONG GIANTS, CARRIED HIGHER AND FASTER WITH THE POWER OF YOUR OWN WINGS.
"YET, Y'KNOW, I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BECOME AN AVENGER AGAIN. BESIDES, WANDA WAS THE LEADER NOW. THEY WERE DOING JUST FINE WITHOUT ME.
"I NEEDED SOMETHING ELSE -- SOMETHING... MORE.
"WHEN I CAME BACK HOME AND SAW MY TRUSTY OLD DRAWING BOARD STARING AT ME, I FOUND IT.
"I PULLED OUT A FEW CROQUIS SHEETS AND DECIDED, DARN IT, I'M GONNA REACTIVATE MY FASHION CAREER."

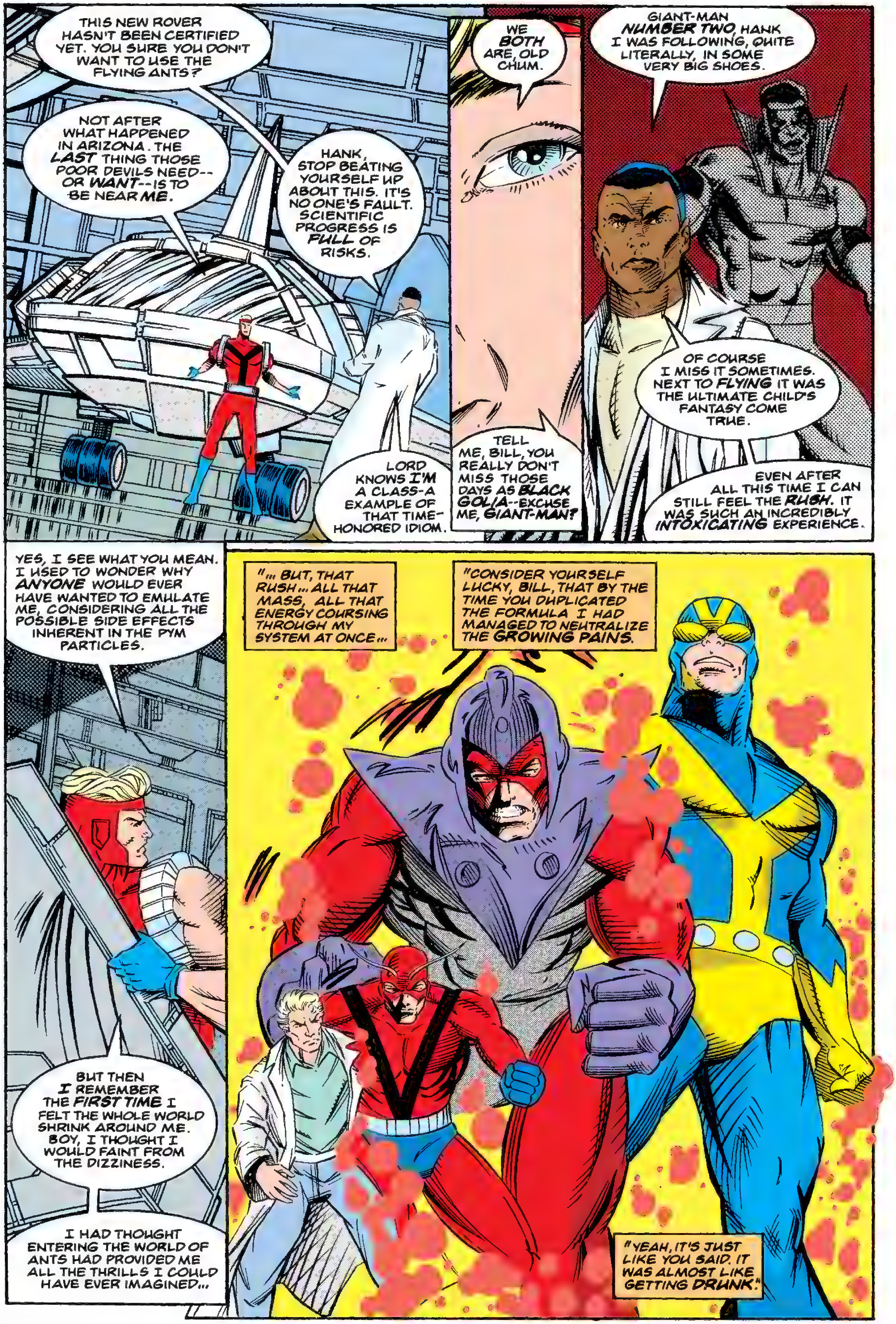

I CALLED... SPENCER... MY AGENT... AND...
JANET? JANET, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
>WHEW< JUST FELT A LITTLE DIZZY FOR A MOMENT THERE.
I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED A LITTLE PALE WHEN YOU WALKED IN. MAYBE YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN...
NO... I JUST PROBABLY DIDN'T CHECK MY CALENDAR, THAT'S ALL. DON'T STOP ME NOW, I'M ON A ROLL.
NOW THEN, WHERE WAS I? OH YEAH, I CALLED MY AGENT, SPENCER. BOY, WAS HE HAPPY TO HEAR FROM *ME* AGAIN.
"SPENCER PROMOTED MY RETURN TO HAUTE COUTURE LIKE THE SECOND COMING. WHEN THE DAY OF THE FASHION SHOW CAME HE HAD SET UP THIS INCREDIBLE MASQUERADE BALL TO CELEBRATE ITS SUCCESS.
CONGRATULATIONS, JAN!
"THE THEME WAS, APPROPRIATELY, "HOLLYWOOD CHARACTERS" AND IT WAS PRETTY WELL ATTENDED. KINDA FLATTERING, Y'KNOW. ALL THOSE UPPER-CRUSTERS DECKED OUT IN SILLY COSTUMES. REMINDED ME OF AN AVENGERS MEETING.
"I ONLY HOPED IT WOULDN'T TURN OUT TO BE A **WAKE**. WAITING FOR REVIEWS ALWAYS PUT AN EDGE TO THOSE AFFAIRS."
10½
JAN! WHERE'S JAN?
I GOT 'EM. I GOT THE REVIEWS!

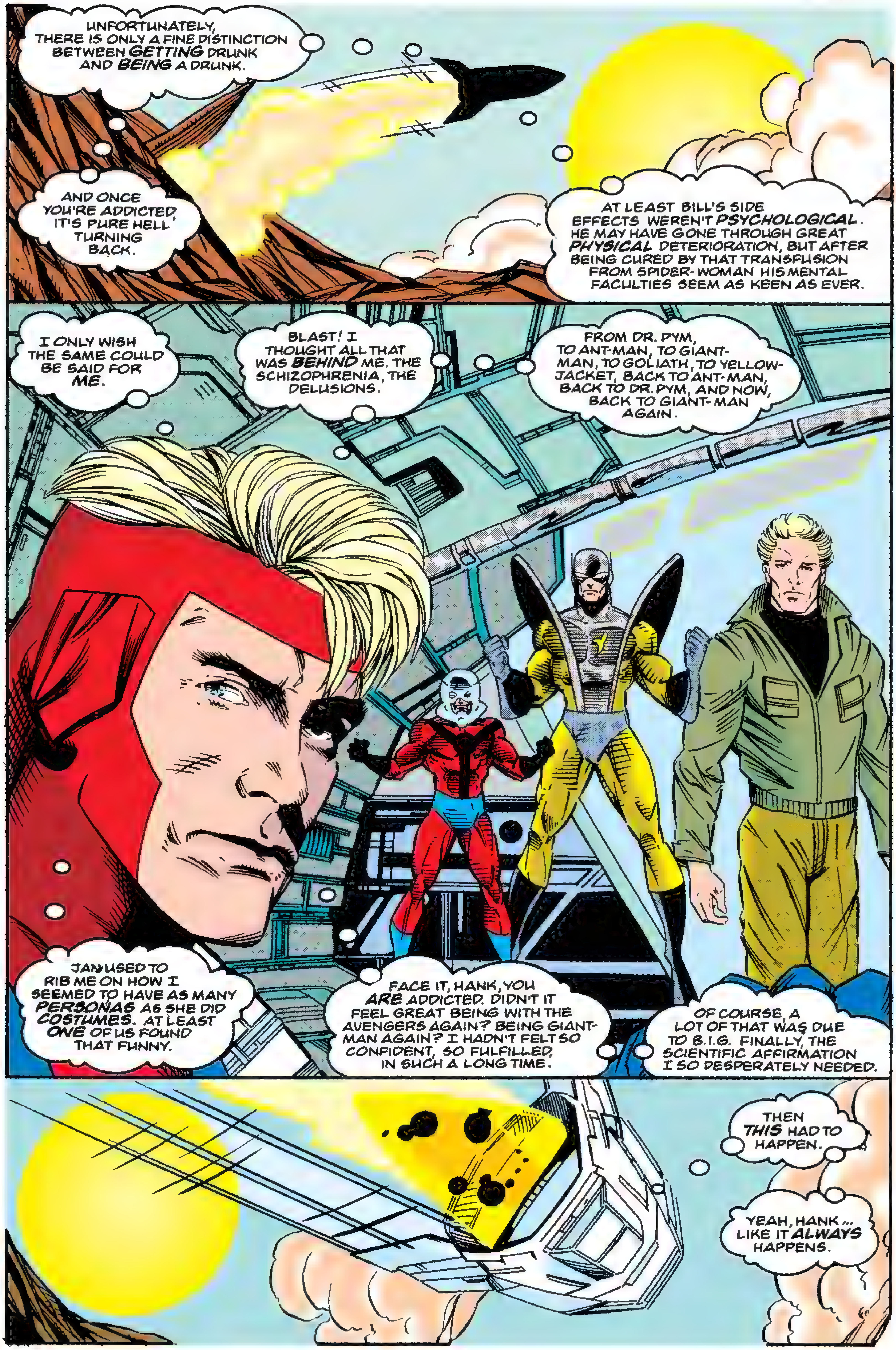

I'M COMING, SPENCER.
TINKERBELL... HOW DROLL.
YEAH, LIKE DRESSING AS A GORILLA IS ORIGINAL. WHICH TARZAN MOVIE ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE FROM?
PLEASE. HAVE A LITTLE RESPECT FOR THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD.
I'M KING KONG.
"I WOULD HAVE LAUGHED IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE SUDDEN **SCREAMS**.
"AT PARTIES LIKE THAT, LOUD SCREAMS AREN'T UNUSUAL. THEY'RE USUALLY FOLLOWED BY EQUALLY LOUD BURSTS OF LAUGHTER.
"NOT THIS TIME, THOUGH.
"THE GUESTS WERE TUMBLING OVER EACH OTHER IN ABSOLUTE PANIC AS SOME OF THEM POINTED TO ONE OF THE TALL WINDOWS WHERE THE TERROR WAS.
"BOY, TALK ABOUT **IRONY**."

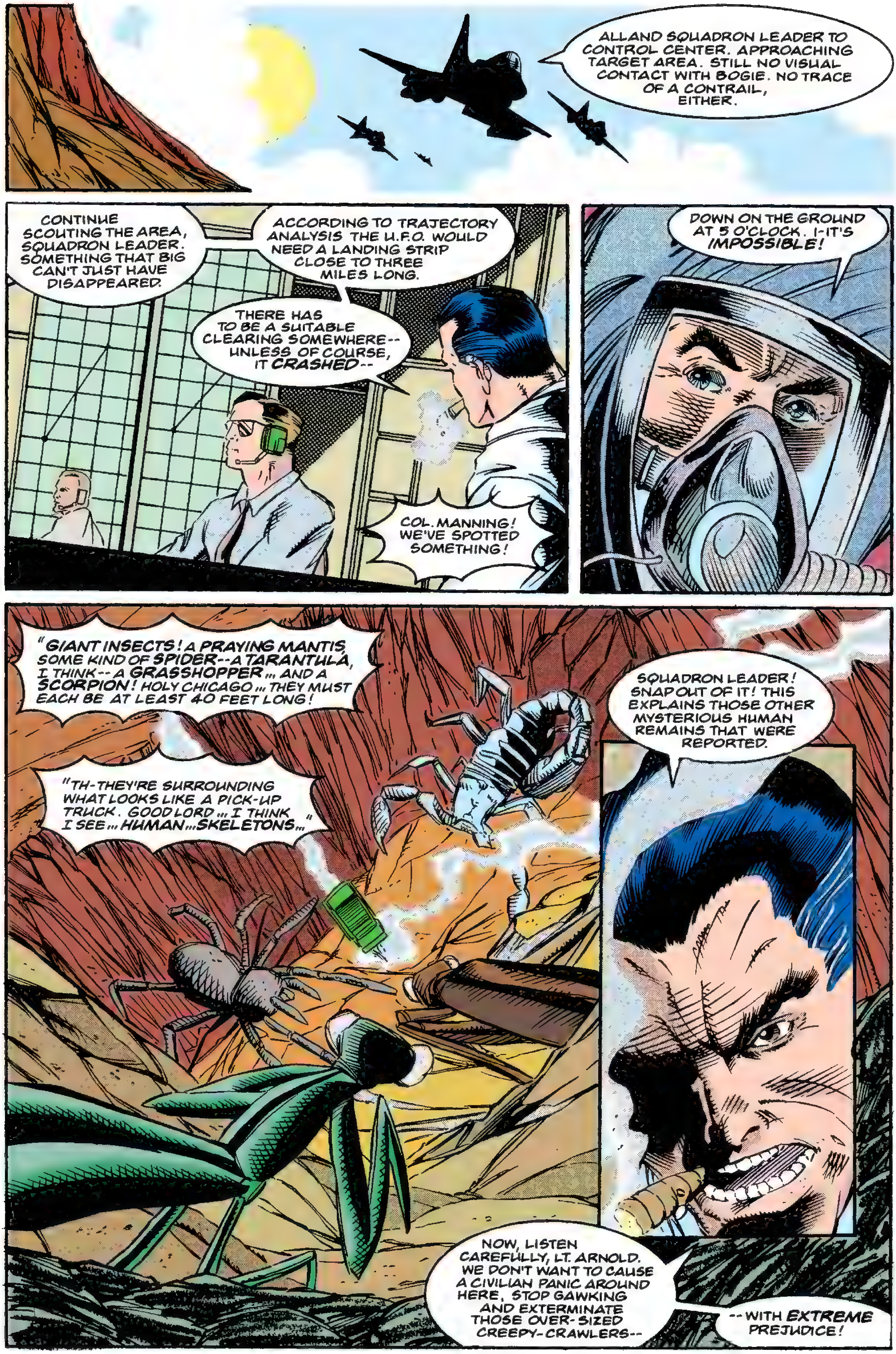

"I'M AFRAID THE IDEA OF BEING ONE-UPPED BY A PARTY-CRASHER WAS PROBABLY JUST TOO MUCH FOR POOR SPENCER.
SPENCER! CALL THE POLICE! CALL 911!
"FOR A SECOND, I GOTTA ADMIT, I THOUGHT WE WERE ALL IN BIG TROUBLE...
"...BUT THEN I SAW THE BALLOONS.
CONGRATS JAN
LOVE YOU
YOU'RE THE GREATEST
#1 DESIGNER
"I GUESS THAT EVEN FOR HOLLYWOOD THIS WAS CONSIDERED PRETTY BIZARRE.
"THE OTHER GUESTS JUST STOOD THERE, STUNNED, LIKE THEY WERE HIT WITH NOVOCAINE.
"I TELL YOU, DR. ROSSIN, YOU NEVER HEARD SUCH SILENCE.
"BUT THEN, THE SILENCE WAS BROKEN...
"...BY A DEEP, BOOMING... OH SO FAMILIAR VOICE."
HEY! I THOUGHT I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE GORILLA-GRAM!
"NOW I WAS STUNNED. I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. NOT HIM. IT WAS JUST SO... OUT OF CHARACTER...
"...SO... WONDERFUL..."
HANK!!
h-a-n-k---x
JAN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
JAN!!

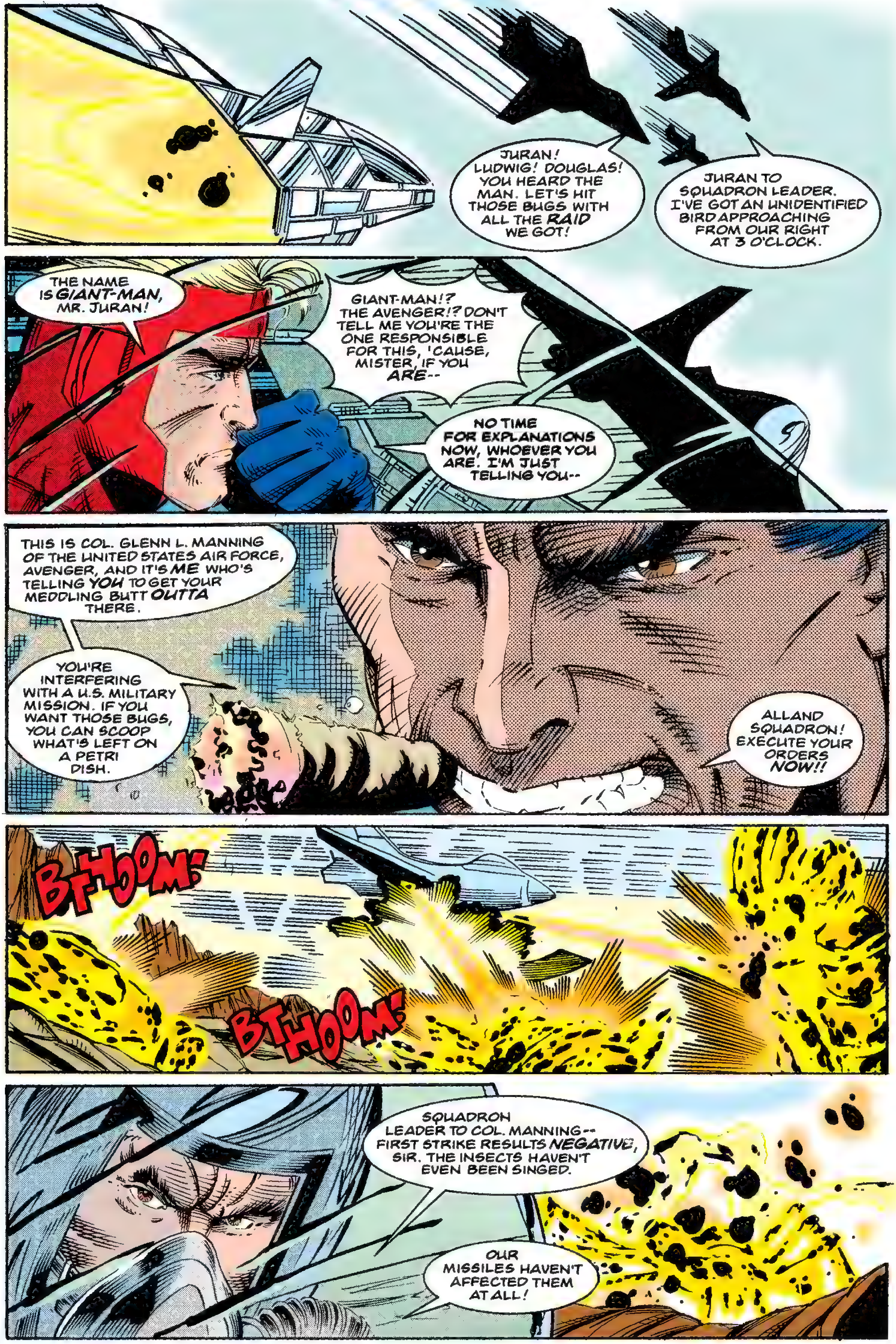

SOMEWHERE IN NEVADA...
HANK! DR. PYM!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, WHAT GOOD'S A COM SYSTEM IF YOU WON'T EVEN ANSWER YOUR BLASTED PAGE!
CHILL OUT, BILL. NO SENSE YOU GETTING ALL STRESSED OUT. IT'S NOT LIKE THIS IS ANYTHING NEW.
EVER SINCE THOSE INSECTS ESCAPED HE'S BEEN BATTLING THOSE OLD PRIVATE DEMONS OF HIS AGAIN.
COMMUNICATING WITH HIM AT TIMES LIKE THESE IS LIKE SCRATCHING AGAINST AN ADAMANTIUM WALL.
LET'S SEE... ACCORDING TO COM-LINK HE'S IN BIO-SCAN.
OH, TERRIFIC. HE'S ACTIVATED THE ACCESS CODE OVERRIDE.
MAN, HANK, YOU SURE DON'T MAKE IT EASY.
DR. HENRY PYM! DO YOU READ ME? THIS IS YOUR ALLEGED LAB PARTNER, DR. WILLIAM B. FOSTER. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
C'MON, HANK, I KNOW YOU FOUND THE RENEGADES. LET ME IN THERE.
NOT NOW, DR. FOSTER! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS.
I'M RUNNING A PARTICLE DIAGNOSTIC COMPARISON ON THE RENEGADES. YOUR PRESENCE WOULD COMPROMISE THE INTEGRITY OF THOSE READINGS.
THEN WHY AREN'T YOU NETWORKING INTO THE RESEARCH COMPUTER? HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO EVALUATE YOUR READINGS IF YOU WON'T EVEN LET ME SEE THEM?
MAYBE, OLD CHUM, IT'S BECAUSE I'M AFRAID YOU'LL SEE THE SAME THING I DO.

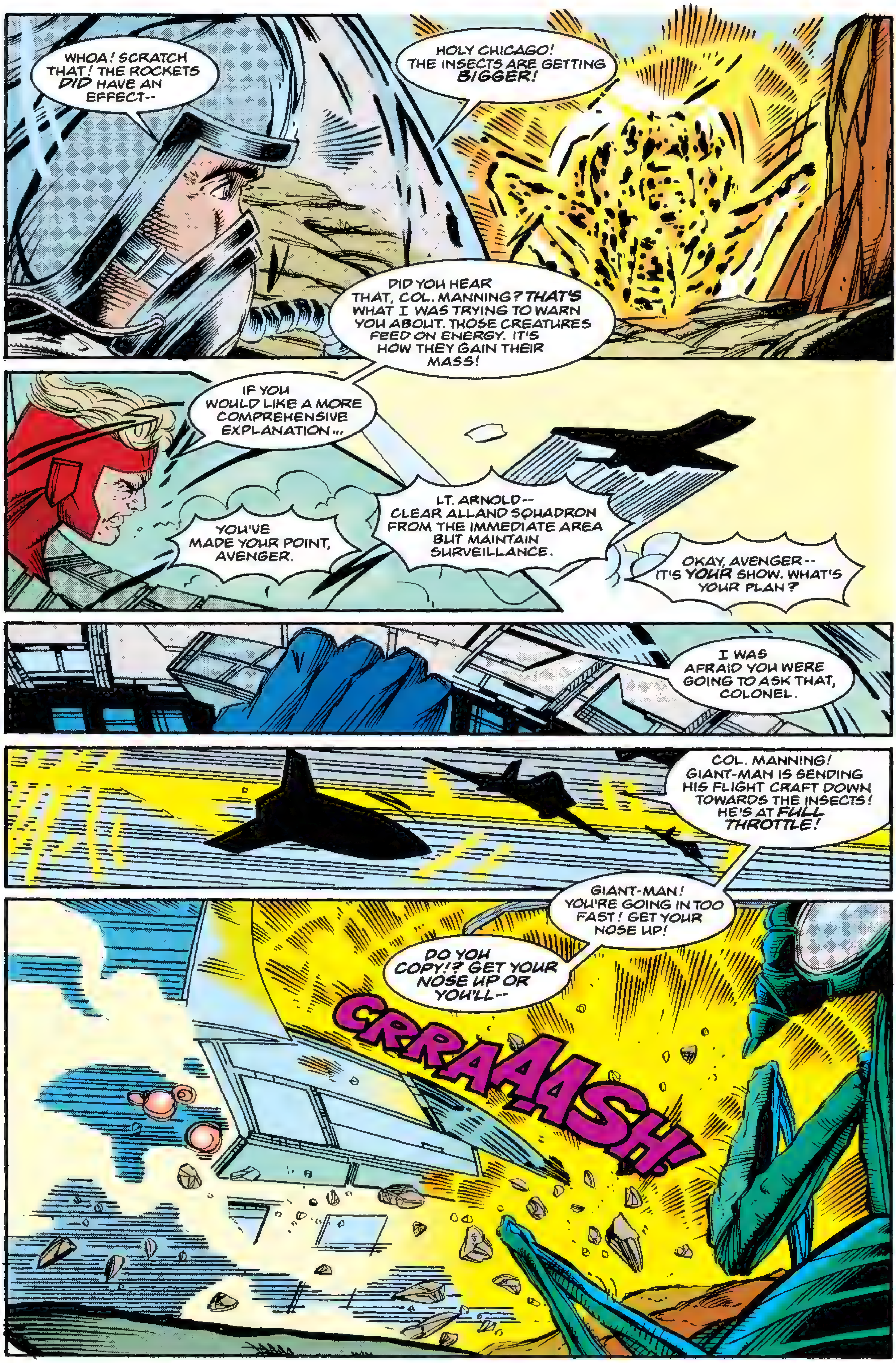

RECORDER ON.
AS POSTULATED, BIOSCAN CONFIRMS THAT THE PARTICLE STRUCTURE OF THE DEAD RENEGADE DOES NOT CARRY THE MATRIX OF THE B.I.G. NUTRIENTS.
THERE ARE HOWEVER DEFINITE TRACES OF VARIANT PYM PARTICLES MANIFESTING UNDENIABLE HOMOGENEITY WITH MY OWN PARTICLE READINGS.
IT APPEARS THAT THE ANTS WERE RIGHT-- I MAY VERY WELL BE THE CAU--
HANK! YOU SHUT OFF YOUR INTERCOM AGAIN!
I CAME TO TELL YOU THAT THE DETECTORS HAVE FLUSHED OUT SOME MORE PARTICLE READINGS.
WHAT!? RECORDER OFF. BILL, DID YOU SAY YOU FOUND MORE RENEGADES?
UNCLEAR. THERE ARE DEFINITE COROLLARIES BUT SEVERAL ANOMALIES FROM THE REFERENCE MATRIX KEEP POPPING UP AS WELL.
"HAVE YOU MANAGED TO PINPOINT THE SOURCE?"
"NEW MEXICO, NEAR SANTA FÉ."
"YOU SAID THERE WERE ANOMALIES -- WHAT KIND OF ANOMALIES?"
"WHILE DEFINITELY ARTHROPODIC, READINGS SUGGEST POSITIVE CLASS IDIOSYNCRASIES NOT INDICATIVE OF HYMENOPTERA."
"HANK ... I DON'T BELIEVE THESE THINGS ARE ANTS."
"CHARGE UP THE ROVER! I'VE GOT TO GET DOWN THERE!
"WHATEVER THEY ARE, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF SOMEONE ELSE FINDS THEM FIRST!"

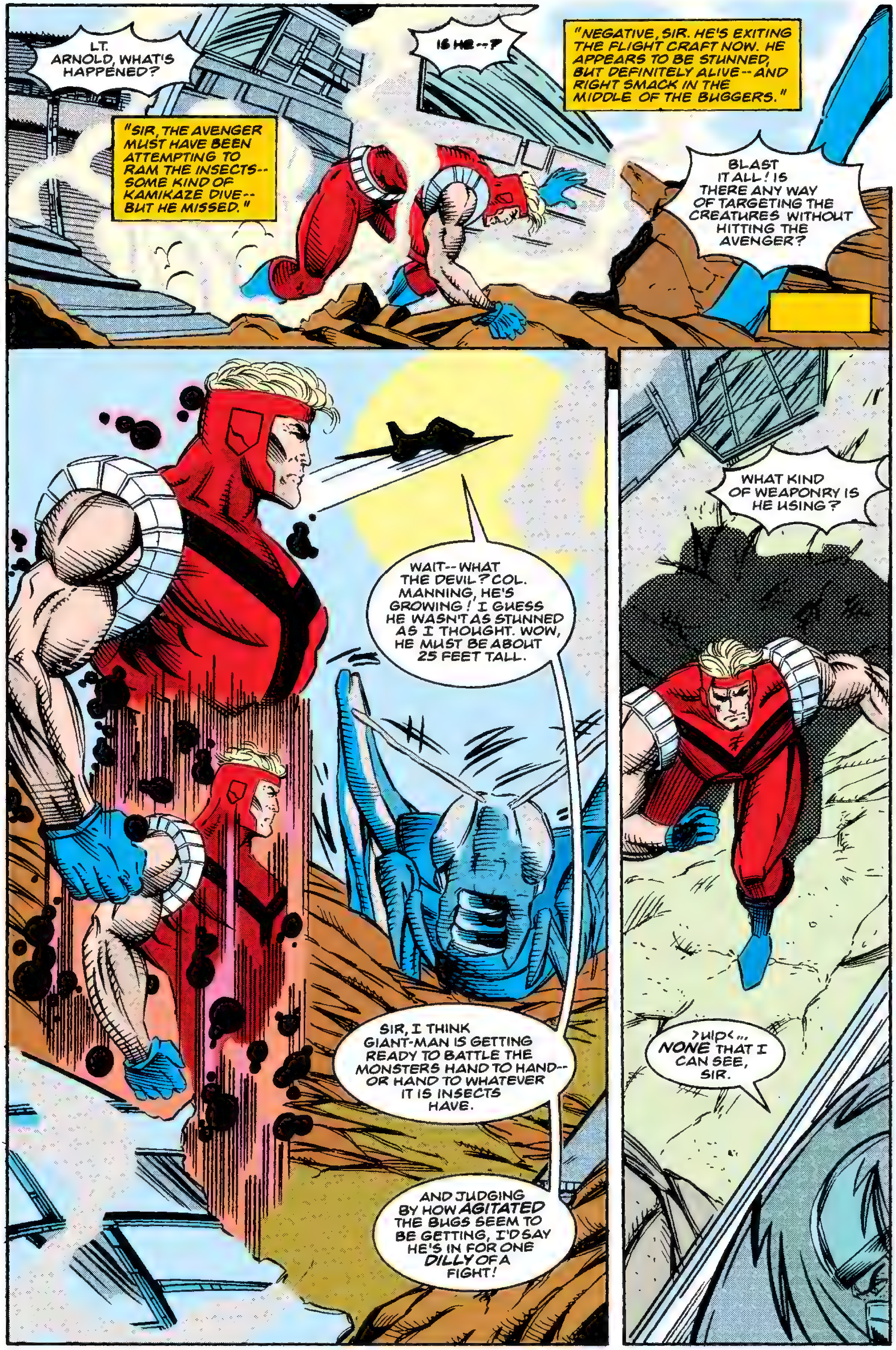

THIS NEW ROVER HASN'T BEEN CERTIFIED YET. YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO USE THE FLYING ANTS?
NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED IN ARIZONA. THE LAST THING THOSE POOR DEVILS NEED--OR WANT--IS TO BE NEAR ME.
HANK, STOP BEATING YOURSELF UP ABOUT THIS. IT'S NO ONE'S FAULT. SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS IS FULL OF RISKS.
LORD KNOWS I'M A CLASS-A EXAMPLE OF THAT TIME-HONORED IDIOM.
WE BOTH ARE, OLD CHUM.
TELL ME, BILL, YOU REALLY DON'T MISS THOSE DAYS AS BLACK GOLIA--EXCUSE ME, GIANT-MAN?
GIANT-MAN NUMBER TWO, HANK. I WAS FOLLOWING, QUITE LITERALLY, IN SOME VERY BIG SHOES.
OF COURSE I MISS IT SOMETIMES. NEXT TO FLYING IT WAS THE ULTIMATE CHILD'S FANTASY COME TRUE.
EVEN AFTER ALL THIS TIME I CAN STILL FEEL THE RUSH. IT WAS SUCH AN INCREDIBLY INTOXICATING EXPERIENCE.
YES, I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN. I USED TO WONDER WHY ANYONE WOULD EVER HAVE WANTED TO EMULATE ME, CONSIDERING ALL THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS INHERENT IN THE PYM PARTICLES.
BUT THEN I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I FELT THE WHOLE WORLD SHRINK AROUND ME. BOY, I THOUGHT I WOULD FAINT FROM THE DIZZINESS.
I HAD THOUGHT ENTERING THE WORLD OF ANTS HAD PROVIDED ME ALL THE THRILLS I COULD HAVE EVER IMAGINED...
"...BUT, THAT RUSH... ALL THAT MASS, ALL THAT ENERGY COURSING THROUGH MY SYSTEM AT ONCE..."
"CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY, BILL, THAT BY THE TIME YOU DUPLICATED THE FORMULA I HAD MANAGED TO NEUTRALIZE THE GROWING PAINS.
"YEAH, IT'S JUST LIKE YOU SAID. IT WAS ALMOST LIKE GETTING DRUNK."

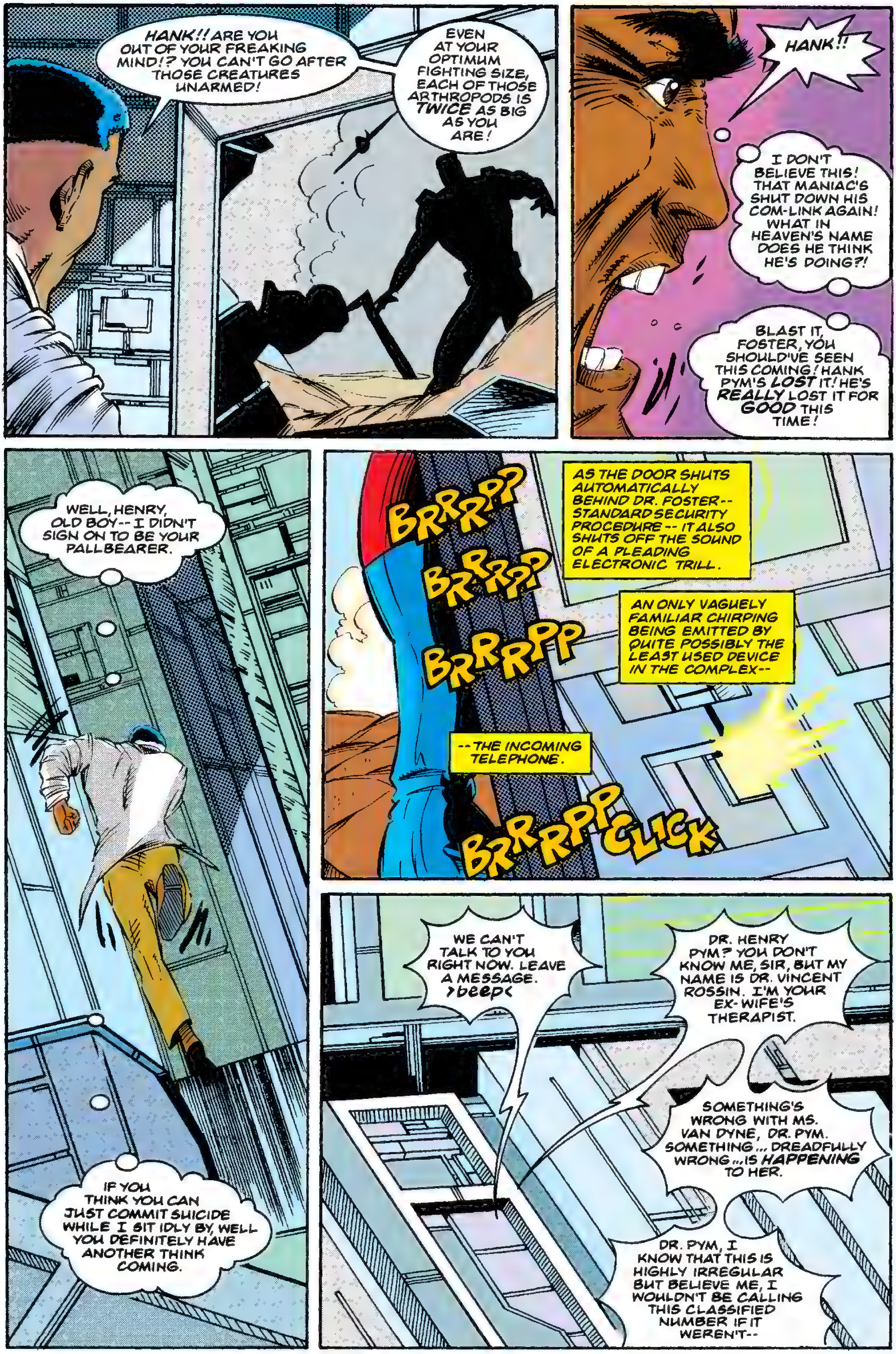

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS ONLY A FINE DISTINCTION BETWEEN *GETTING* DRUNK AND *BEING* A DRUNK.
AND ONCE YOU'RE ADDICTED, IT'S PURE HELL TURNING BACK.
AT LEAST BILL'S SIDE EFFECTS WEREN'T *PSYCHOLOGICAL*. HE MAY HAVE GONE THROUGH GREAT *PHYSICAL* DETERIORATION, BUT AFTER BEING CURED BY THAT TRANSFUSION FROM SPIDER-WOMAN HIS MENTAL FACULTIES SEEM AS KEEN AS EVER.
I ONLY WISH THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR *ME*.
BLAST! I THOUGHT ALL THAT WAS *BEHIND* ME. THE SCHIZOPHRENIA, THE DELUSIONS.
FROM DR. PYM, TO ANT-MAN, TO GIANT-MAN, TO GOLIATH, TO YELLOWJACKET, BACK TO ANT-MAN, BACK TO DR. PYM, AND NOW, BACK TO GIANT-MAN AGAIN.
JAN USED TO RIB ME ON HOW I SEEMED TO HAVE AS MANY *PERSONAS* AS SHE DID *COSTUMES*. AT LEAST *ONE* OF US FOUND THAT FUNNY.
FACE IT, HANK, YOU *ARE* ADDICTED. DIDN'T IT FEEL GREAT BEING WITH THE AVENGERS AGAIN? BEING GIANT-MAN AGAIN? I HADN'T FELT SO CONFIDENT, SO FULFILLED, IN SUCH A LONG TIME.
OF COURSE, A LOT OF THAT WAS DUE TO B.I.G. FINALLY, THE SCIENTIFIC AFFIRMATION I SO DESPERATELY NEEDED.
THEN *THIS* HAD TO HAPPEN.
YEAH, HANK... LIKE IT *ALWAYS* HAPPENS.

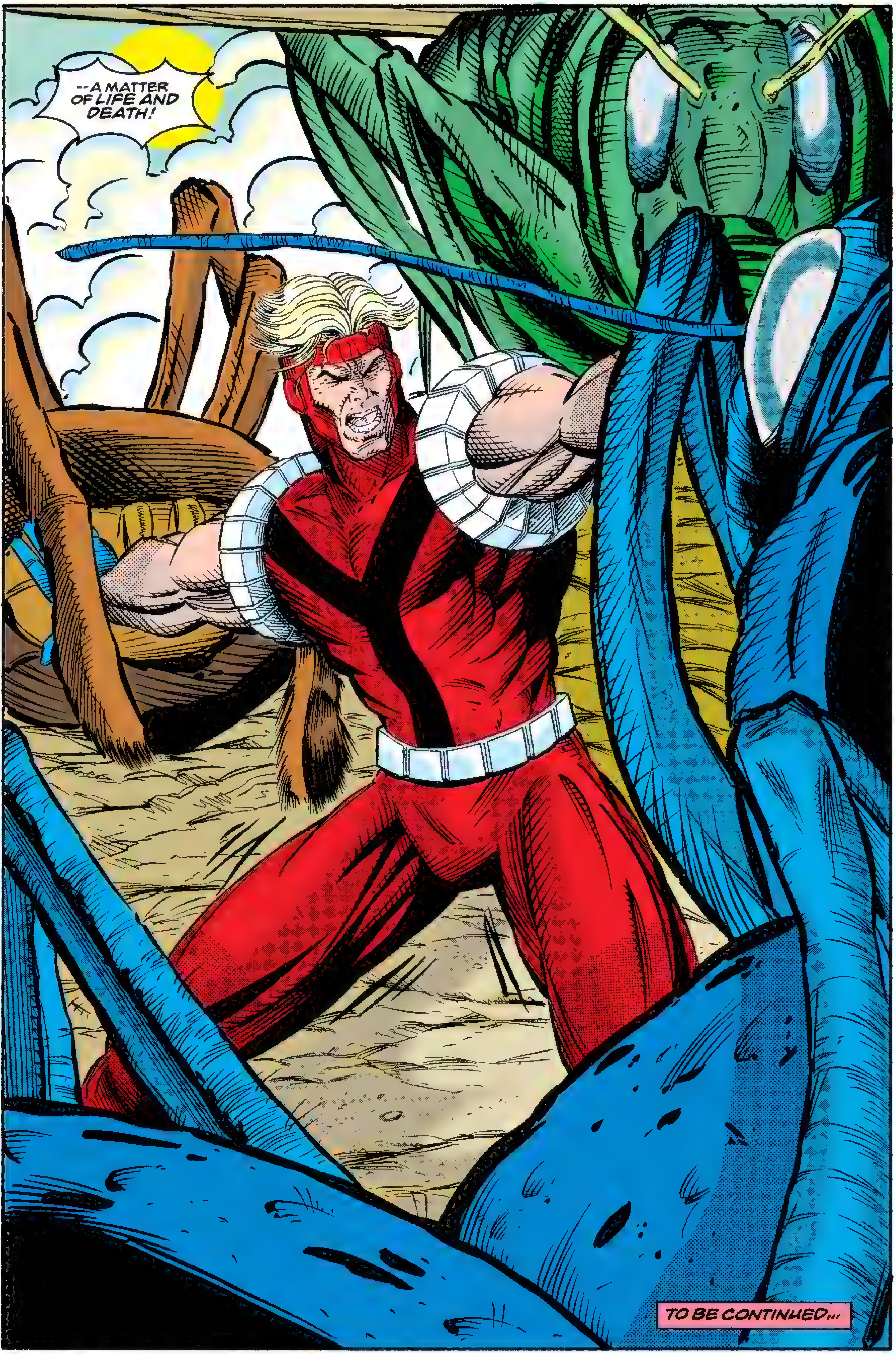

ALLAND SQUADRON LEADER TO CONTROL CENTER. APPROACHING TARGET AREA. STILL NO VISUAL CONTACT WITH BOGIE. NO TRACE OF A CONTRAIL, EITHER.
CONTINUE SCOUTING THE AREA, SQUADRON LEADER. SOMETHING THAT BIG CAN'T JUST HAVE DISAPPEARED.
ACCORDING TO TRAJECTORY ANALYSIS THE U.F.O. WOULD NEED A LANDING STRIP CLOSE TO THREE MILES LONG.
THERE HAS TO BE A SUITABLE CLEARING SOMEWHERE-- UNLESS OF COURSE, IT *CRASHED*--
COL. MANNING! WE'VE SPOTTED SOMETHING!
DOWN ON THE GROUND AT 5 O'CLOCK. I-IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!*
"*GIANT INSECTS!* A *PRAYING MANTIS,* SOME KIND OF *SPIDER*--A *TARANTULA,* I THINK-- A *GRASSHOPPER*... AND A *SCORPION!* HOLY CHICAGO... THEY MUST EACH BE AT LEAST 40 FEET LONG!
"TH-THEY'RE SURROUNDING WHAT LOOKS LIKE A PICK-UP TRUCK. GOOD LORD... I THINK I SEE... *HUMAN... SKELETONS...*"
SQUADRON LEADER! SNAP OUT OF IT! THIS EXPLAINS THOSE OTHER MYSTERIOUS HUMAN REMAINS THAT WERE REPORTED.
NOW, LISTEN CAREFULLY, LT. ARNOLD. WE DON'T WANT TO CAUSE A CIVILIAN PANIC AROUND HERE. STOP GAWKING AND EXTERMINATE THOSE OVER-SIZED CREEPY-CRAWLERS--
--WITH *EXTREME* PREJUDICE!


JURAN! LUDWIG! DOUGLAS! YOU HEARD THE MAN. LET'S HIT THOSE BUGS WITH ALL THE *RAID* WE GOT!
JURAN TO SQUADRON LEADER. I'VE GOT AN UNIDENTIFIED BIRD APPROACHING FROM OUR RIGHT AT 3 O'CLOCK.
THE NAME IS *GIANT-MAN*, MR. JURAN!
GIANT-MAN!? THE AVENGER!? DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, 'CAUSE, MISTER, IF YOU *ARE*--
NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS NOW, WHOEVER YOU ARE. I'M JUST TELLING YOU--
THIS IS COL. GLENN L. MANNING OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, AVENGER, AND IT'S *ME* WHO'S TELLING *YOU* TO GET YOUR MEDDLING BUTT *OUTTA* THERE.
YOU'RE INTERFERING WITH A U.S. MILITARY MISSION. IF YOU WANT THOSE BUGS, YOU CAN SCOOP WHAT'S LEFT ON A PETRI DISH.
ALL AND SQUADRON! EXECUTE YOUR ORDERS *NOW!!*
BTHOOM!
BTHOOM!
SQUADRON LEADER TO COL. MANNING-- FIRST STRIKE RESULTS *NEGATIVE*, SIR. THE INSECTS HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN SINGED.
OUR MISSILES HAVEN'T AFFECTED THEM AT ALL!


WHOA! SCRATCH THAT! THE ROCKETS *DID* HAVE AN EFFECT--
HOLY CHICAGO! THE INSECTS ARE GETTING *BIGGER!*
DID YOU HEAR THAT, COL. MANNING? *THAT'S* WHAT I WAS TRYING TO WARN YOU ABOUT. THOSE CREATURES FEED ON ENERGY. IT'S HOW THEY GAIN THEIR MASS!
IF YOU WOULD LIKE A MORE COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION...
YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT, AVENGER.
LT. ARNOLD-- CLEAR ALL AND SQUADRON FROM THE IMMEDIATE AREA BUT MAINTAIN SURVEILLANCE.
OKAY, AVENGER-- IT'S *YOUR* SHOW. WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
I WAS AFRAID YOU WERE GOING TO ASK THAT, COLONEL.
COL. MANNING! GIANT-MAN IS SENDING HIS FLIGHT CRAFT DOWN TOWARDS THE INSECTS! HE'S AT *FULL THROTTLE!*
GIANT-MAN! YOU'RE GOING IN TOO FAST! GET YOUR NOSE UP!
DO YOU COPY!? GET YOUR NOSE UP OR YOU'LL--
CRRAAAASH!

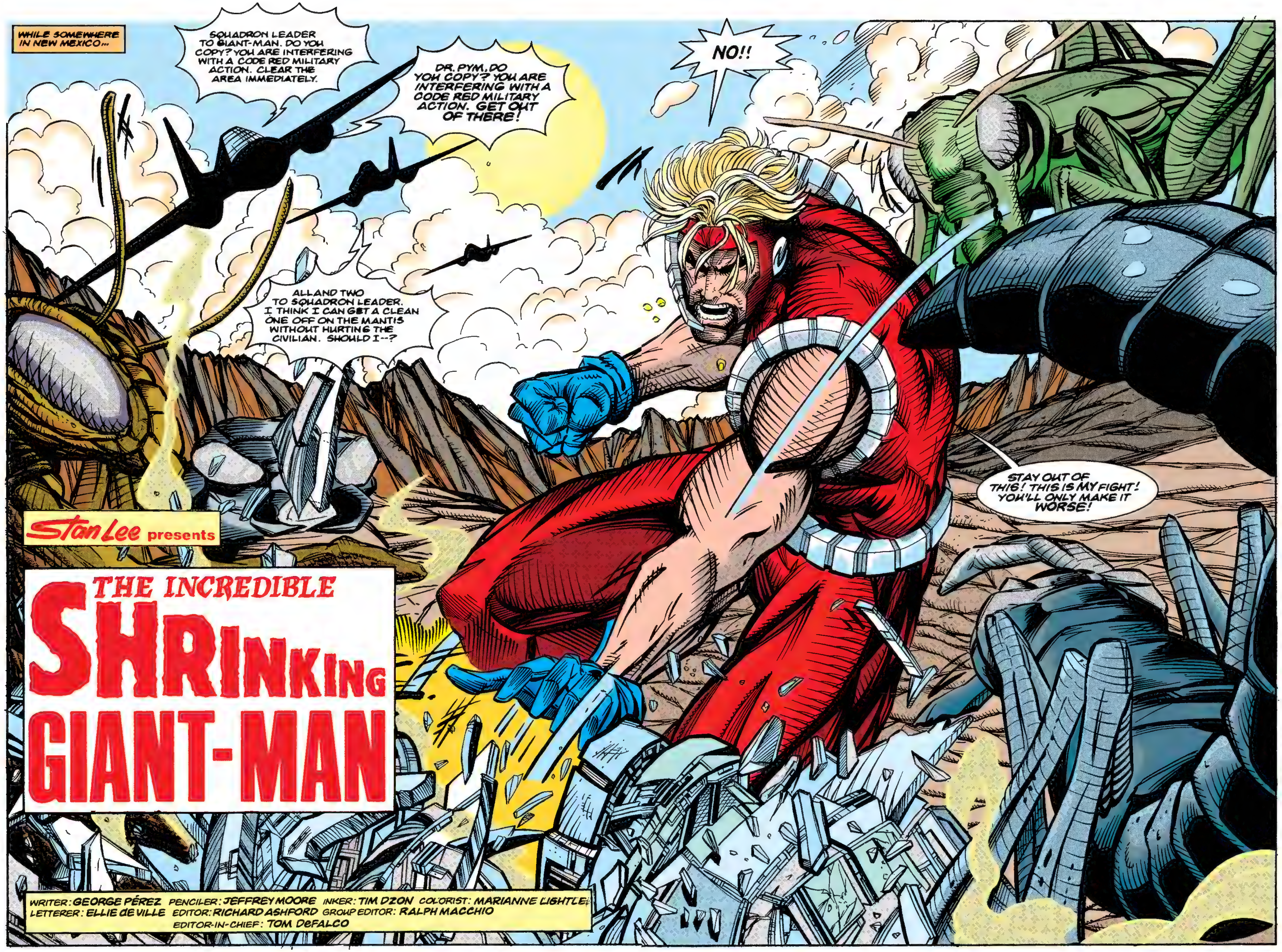

LT. ARNOLD, WHAT'S HAPPENED?
"SIR, THE AVENGER MUST HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO RAM THE INSECTS--SOME KIND OF KAMIKAZE DIVE--BUT HE MISSED."
IS HE--?
"NEGATIVE, SIR. HE'S EXITING THE FLIGHT CRAFT NOW. HE APPEARS TO BE STUNNED, BUT DEFINITELY ALIVE--AND RIGHT SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BUGGERS."
BLAST IT ALL! IS THERE ANY WAY OF TARGETING THE CREATURES WITHOUT HITTING THE AVENGER?
WAIT--WHAT THE DEVIL? COL. MANNING, HE'S GROWING! I GUESS HE WASN'T AS STUNNED AS I THOUGHT. WOW, HE MUST BE ABOUT 25 FEET TALL.
SIR, I THINK GIANT-MAN IS GETTING READY TO BATTLE THE MONSTERS HAND TO HAND--OR HAND TO WHATEVER IT IS INSECTS HAVE.
AND JUDGING BY HOW AGITATED THE BUGS SEEM TO BE GETTING, I'D SAY HE'S IN FOR ONE DILLY OF A FIGHT!
WHAT KIND OF WEAPONRY IS HE USING?
>ULP<... NONE THAT I CAN SEE, SIR.


HANK!! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR FREAKING MIND!? YOU CAN'T GO AFTER THOSE CREATURES UNARMED!
EVEN AT YOUR OPTIMUM FIGHTING SIZE, EACH OF THOSE ARTHROPODS IS TWICE AS BIG AS YOU ARE!
HANK!!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS! THAT MANIAC'S SHUT DOWN HIS COM-LINK AGAIN! WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING?!
BLAST IT, FOSTER, YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THIS COMING! HANK PYM'S LOST IT! HE'S REALLY LOST IT FOR GOOD THIS TIME!
WELL, HENRY, OLD BOY-- I DIDN'T SIGN ON TO BE YOUR PALLBEARER.
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST COMMIT SUICIDE WHILE I SIT IDLY BY, WELL YOU DEFINITELY HAVE ANOTHER THINK COMING.
AS THE DOOR SHUTS AUTOMATICALLY BEHIND DR. FOSTER-- STANDARD SECURITY PROCEDURE -- IT ALSO SHUTS OFF THE SOUND OF A PLEADING ELECTRONIC TRILL.
BRRRPP
BRRRPP
AN ONLY VAGUELY FAMILIAR CHIRPING BEING EMITTED BY QUITE POSSIBLY THE LEAST USED DEVICE IN THE COMPLEX--
BRRRPP
--THE INCOMING TELEPHONE.
BRRRPP CLICK
WE CAN'T TALK TO YOU RIGHT NOW. LEAVE A MESSAGE. >beep<
DR. HENRY PYM? YOU DON'T KNOW ME, SIR, BUT MY NAME IS DR. VINCENT ROSSIN. I'M YOUR EX-WIFE'S THERAPIST.
SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH MS. VAN DYNE, DR. PYM. SOMETHING... DREADFULLY WRONG... IS HAPPENING TO HER.
DR. PYM, I KNOW THAT THIS IS HIGHLY IRREGULAR BUT BELIEVE ME, I WOULDN'T BE CALLING THIS CLASSIFIED NUMBER IF IT WEREN'T--


--A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
TO BE CONTINUED...

DOUBLE FEATURE
MARVEL COMICS
GIANT MAN™
380 NOV
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
AVENGERS®

AN UNDERGROUND RESEARCH FACILITY, SOMEWHERE IN DEATH VALLEY...
I CAN'T JUST STAND BY AND LET HANK GET HIMSELF KILLED.
BUT IF I'M GOING TO BE OF ANY HELP, I FIGURED I'M GOING TO NEED SOME HEAVY ARTILLERY.
I SHOULD HAVE SEEN ALL THIS COMING. HANK PYM HAD LET SO MUCH RIDE ON THE SUCCESS OF B.I.G. THAT WHEN IT WENT SO HORRIBLY WRONG...
BLAST IT, BILL, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING...
GOTTA CHANCE USING THE OLD ROVER, NO MATTER HOW UNRELIABLE IT IS. I'VE GOT TO GET TO HANK BEFORE HE MAKES GOOD ON HIS APPARENT DEATH WISH.
GOING SOMEWHERE, TERRAN?
WHAT THE--?!
AAAIIEEE!
KZZAATTTT!
REST NOW, DR. FOSTER. WHEN WE ARE DONE WITH YOU, THERE WILL BE QUITE A SURPRISE WAITING FOR THE ACCURSED DR. PYM UPON HIS RETURN--
--THAT IS, OF COURSE, IF HE RETURNS.


WHILE SOMEWHERE IN NEW MEXICO...
SQUADRON LEADER TO GIANT-MAN. DO YOU COPY? YOU ARE INTERFERING WITH A CODE RED MILITARY ACTION. CLEAR THE AREA IMMEDIATELY.
DR. PYM, DO YOU COPY? YOU ARE INTERFERING WITH A CODE RED MILITARY ACTION. GET OUT OF THERE!
NO!!
ALLAND TWO TO SQUADRON LEADER. I THINK I CAN GET A CLEAN ONE OFF ON THE MANTIS WITHOUT HURTING THE CIVILIAN. SHOULD I--?
STAY OUT OF THIS! THIS IS MY FIGHT! YOU'LL ONLY MAKE IT WORSE!

Stan Lee presents

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING GIANT-MAN

WRITER: GEORGE PÉREZ PENCILER: JEFFREY MOORE INKER: TIM DZON COLORIST: MARIANNE LIGHTLE
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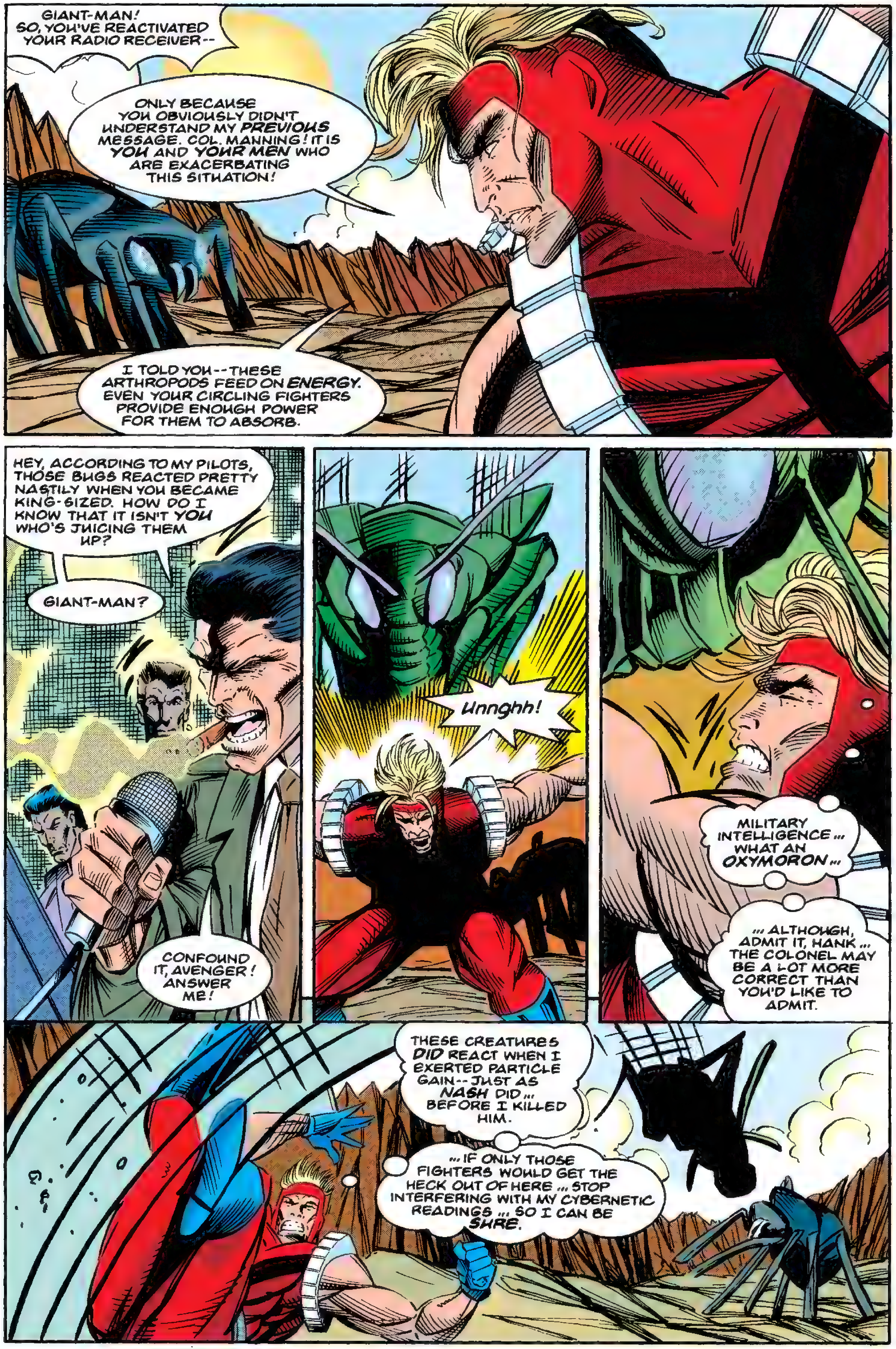
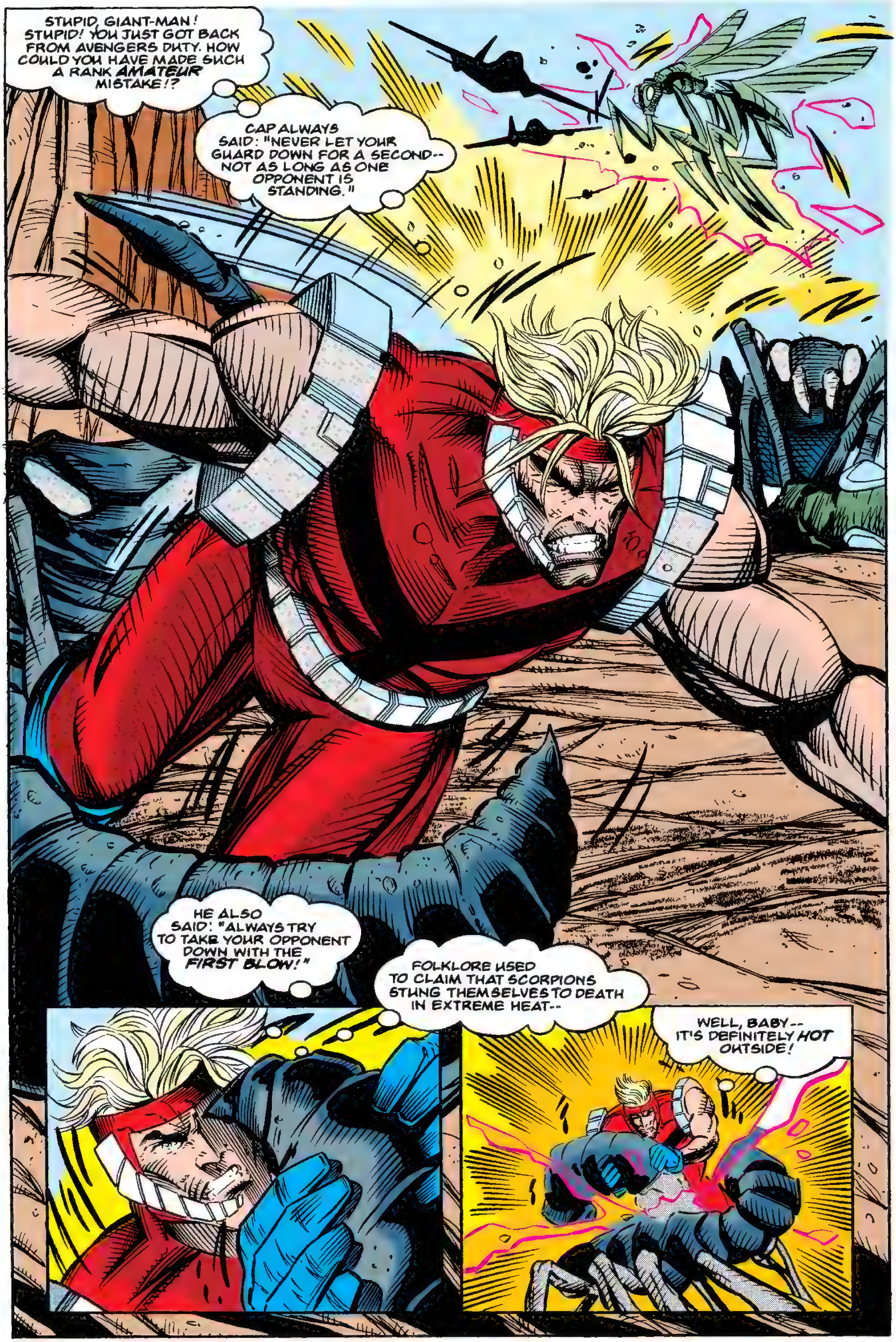
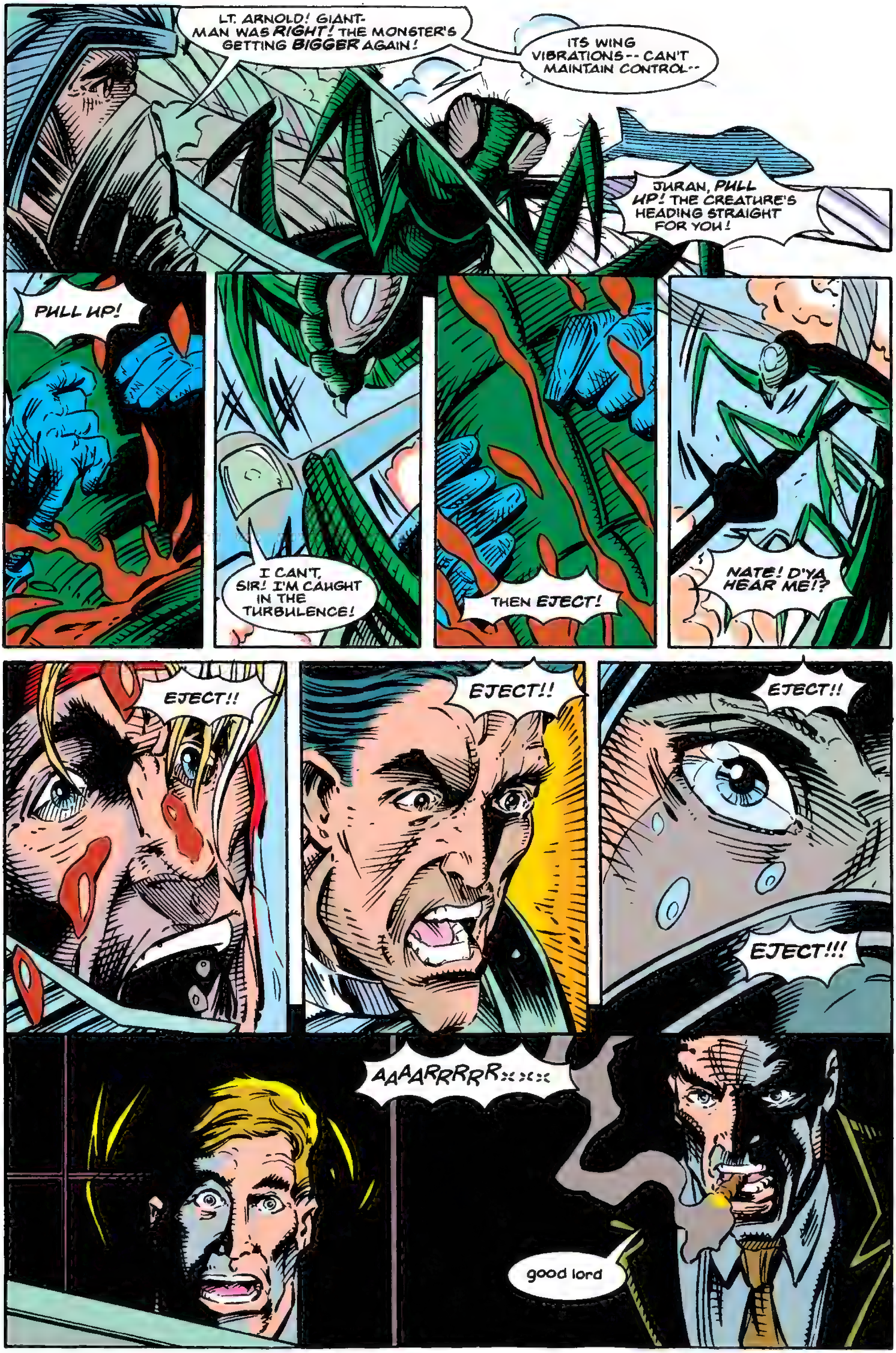
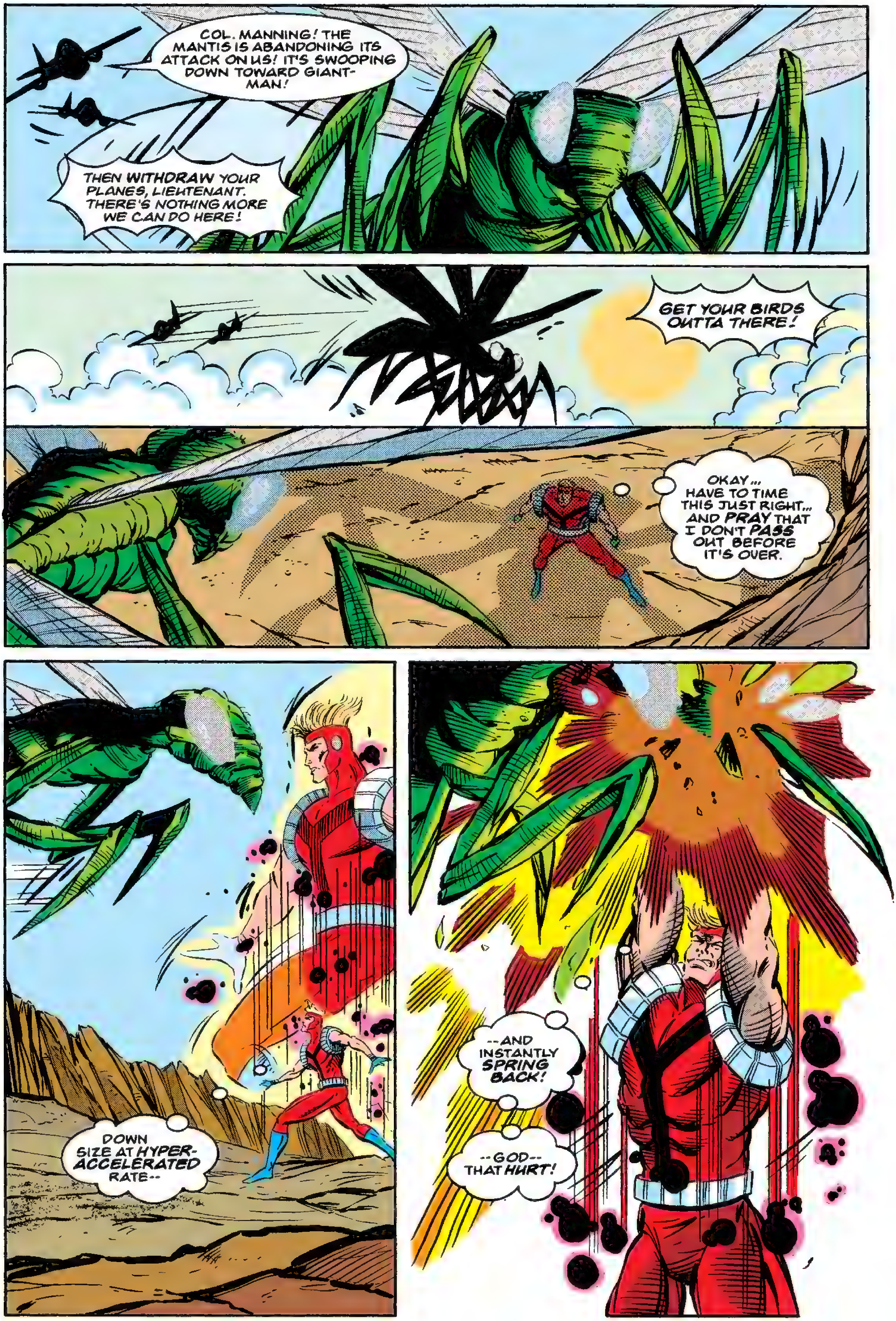

GIANT-MAN! SO, YOU'VE REACTIVATED YOUR RADIO RECEIVER--
ONLY BECAUSE YOU OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MY *PREVIOUS* MESSAGE. COL. MANNING! IT IS *YOU* AND *YOUR MEN* WHO ARE EXACERBATING THIS SITUATION!
I TOLD YOU--THESE ARTHROPODS FEED ON *ENERGY*. EVEN YOUR CIRCLING FIGHTERS PROVIDE ENOUGH POWER FOR THEM TO ABSORB.
HEY, ACCORDING TO MY PILOTS, THOSE BUGS REACTED PRETTY NASTILY WHEN YOU BECAME KING-SIZED. HOW DO I KNOW THAT IT ISN'T *YOU* WHO'S JUICING THEM UP?
GIANT-MAN?
CONFOUND IT, AVENGER! ANSWER ME!
Unnghh!
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE... WHAT AN *OXYMORON*...
...ALTHOUGH, ADMIT IT, HANK... THE COLONEL MAY BE A LOT MORE CORRECT THAN YOU'D LIKE TO ADMIT.
THESE CREATURES *DID* REACT WHEN I EXERTED PARTICLE GAIN--JUST AS *NASH* DID... BEFORE I KILLED HIM.
...IF ONLY THOSE FIGHTERS WOULD GET THE HECK OUT OF HERE... STOP INTERFERING WITH MY CYBERNETIC READINGS... SO I CAN BE *SURE*.

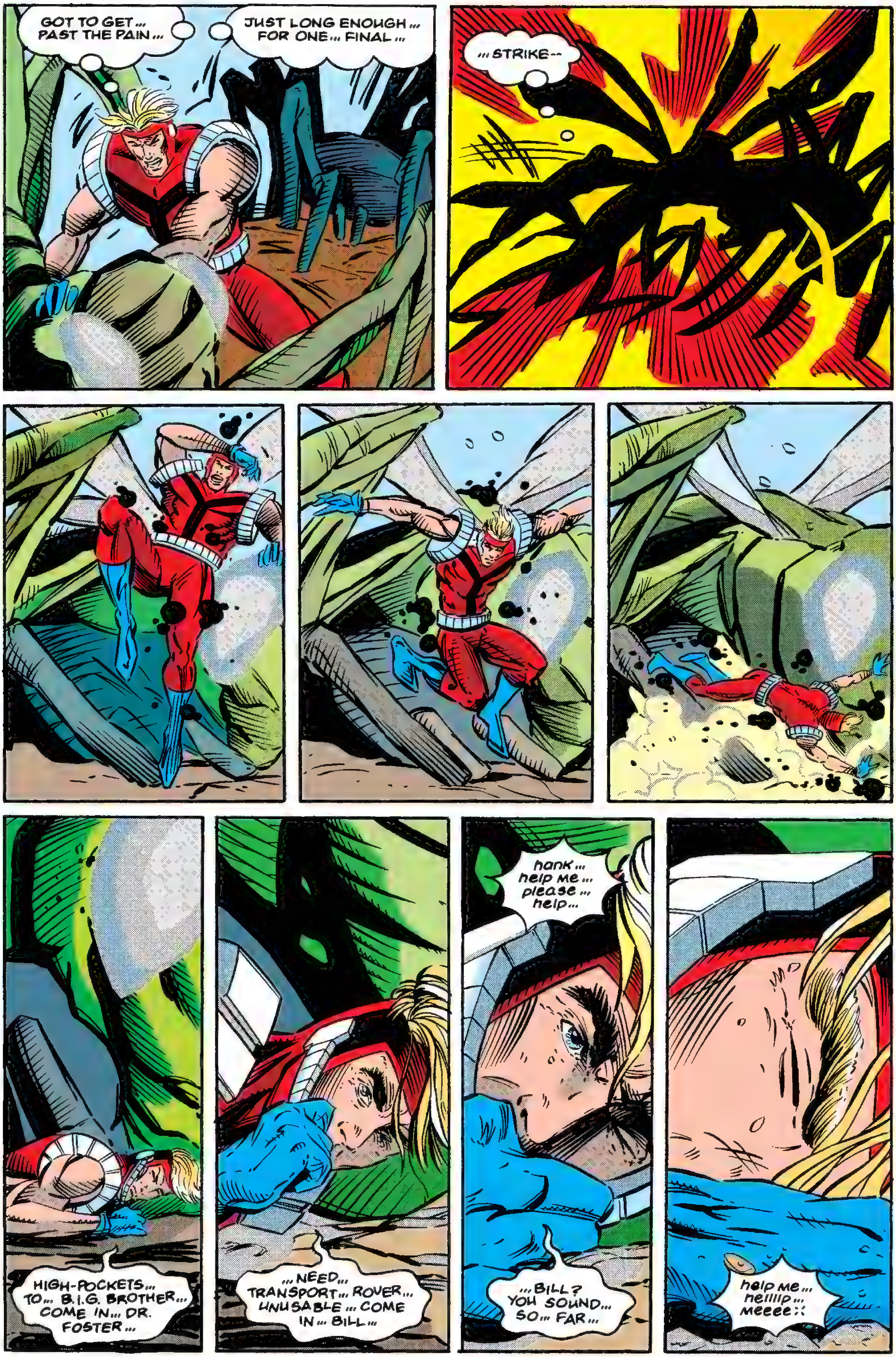
WELL, THAT TAKES CARE OF THE HOPPER. JUDGING BY HOW QUICKLY THE TARANTULA POUNCED ON HIM, IT SEEMS THAT THE CREATURES' NEED FOR MORE STANDARD NOURISHMENT HASN'T BEEN REPRESSED BY THEIR MUTATION.
IT WOULD CERTAINLY ACCOUNT FOR THE POOR SOULS IN THE TRUCK.
THAT BUZZING--
GOOD LORD...
NO!!
COL. MANNING! PULL YOUR JETS OUT OF HERE! THEY DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THAT GIANT MANTIS!
LISTEN TO ME, YOU IDIOT! YOUR MEN WILL ALL BE KILLED--
NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT, AVENGER!
ALL AND SQUADRON! BLOW THAT OVER-GROWN JIMINY CRICKET TO KINGDOM COME!
YES, SIR!
YOU ARROGANT FOOL! DIDN'T YOU LEARN ANYTHING FROM THE LAST TIME!?
YOU'RE GIVING IT EXACTLY WHAT IT--
ARRRHHH!!!


STUPID, GIANT-MAN! STUPID! YOU JUST GOT BACK FROM AVENGERS DUTY. HOW COULD YOU HAVE MADE SUCH A RANK *AMATEUR* MISTAKE!?
CAP ALWAYS SAID: "NEVER LET YOUR GUARD DOWN FOR A SECOND-- NOT AS LONG AS ONE OPPONENT IS STANDING."
HE ALSO SAID: "ALWAYS TRY TO TAKE YOUR OPPONENT DOWN WITH THE *FIRST BLOW!*"
FOLKLORE USED TO CLAIM THAT SCORPIONS STUNG THEMSELVES TO DEATH IN EXTREME HEAT--
WELL, BABY-- IT'S DEFINITELY *HOT* OUTSIDE!

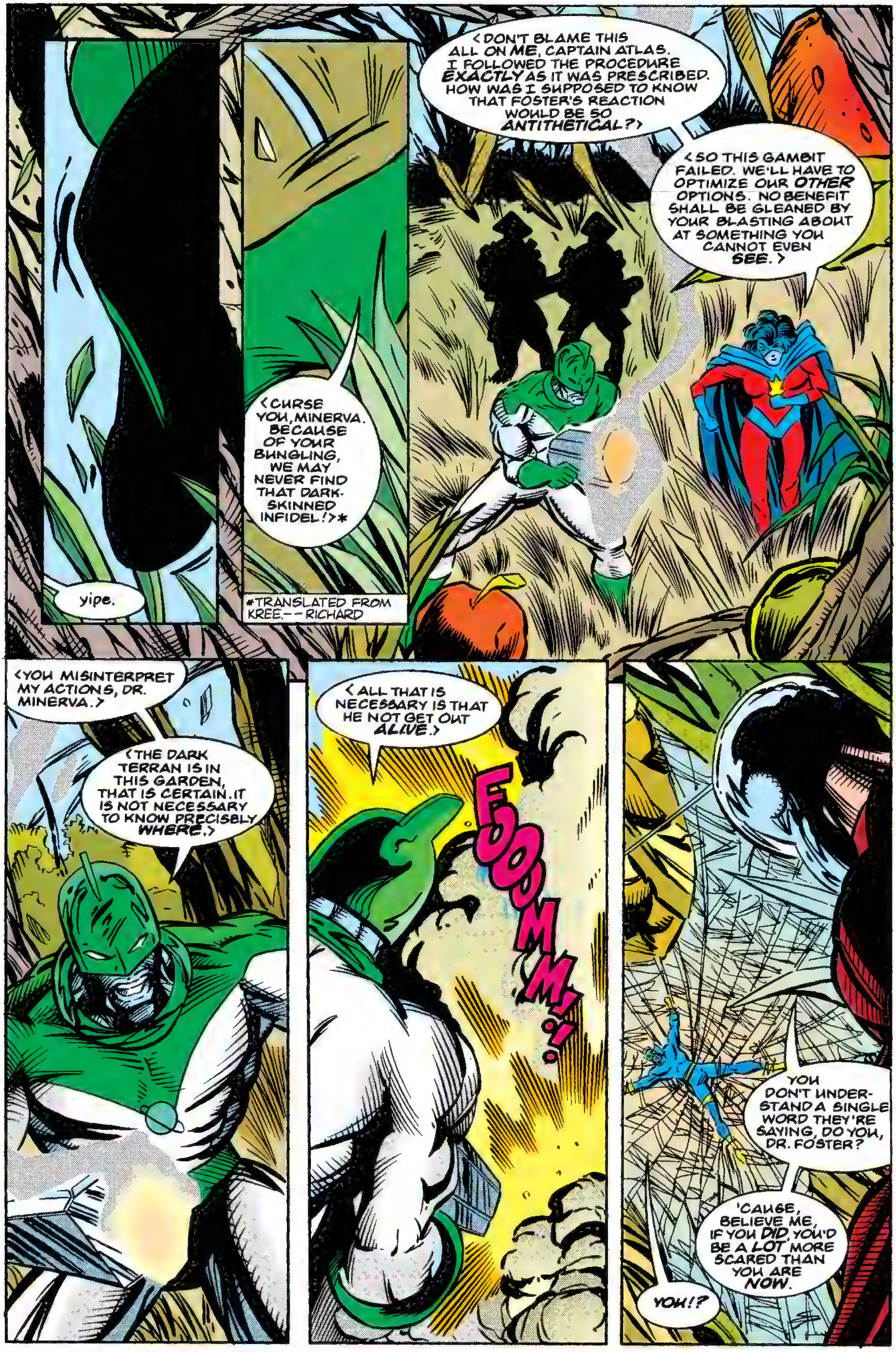

LT. ARNOLD! GIANT-MAN WAS RIGHT! THE MONSTER'S GETTING BIGGER AGAIN!
ITS WING VIBRATIONS-- CAN'T MAINTAIN CONTROL--
JURAN, PULL UP! THE CREATURE'S HEADING STRAIGHT FOR YOU!
PULL UP!
I CAN'T, SIR! I'M CAUGHT IN THE TURBULENCE!
THEN EJECT!
NATE! D'YA HEAR ME!?
EJECT!!
EJECT!!
EJECT!!
EJECT!!!
AAAARRRRR::::::
good lord

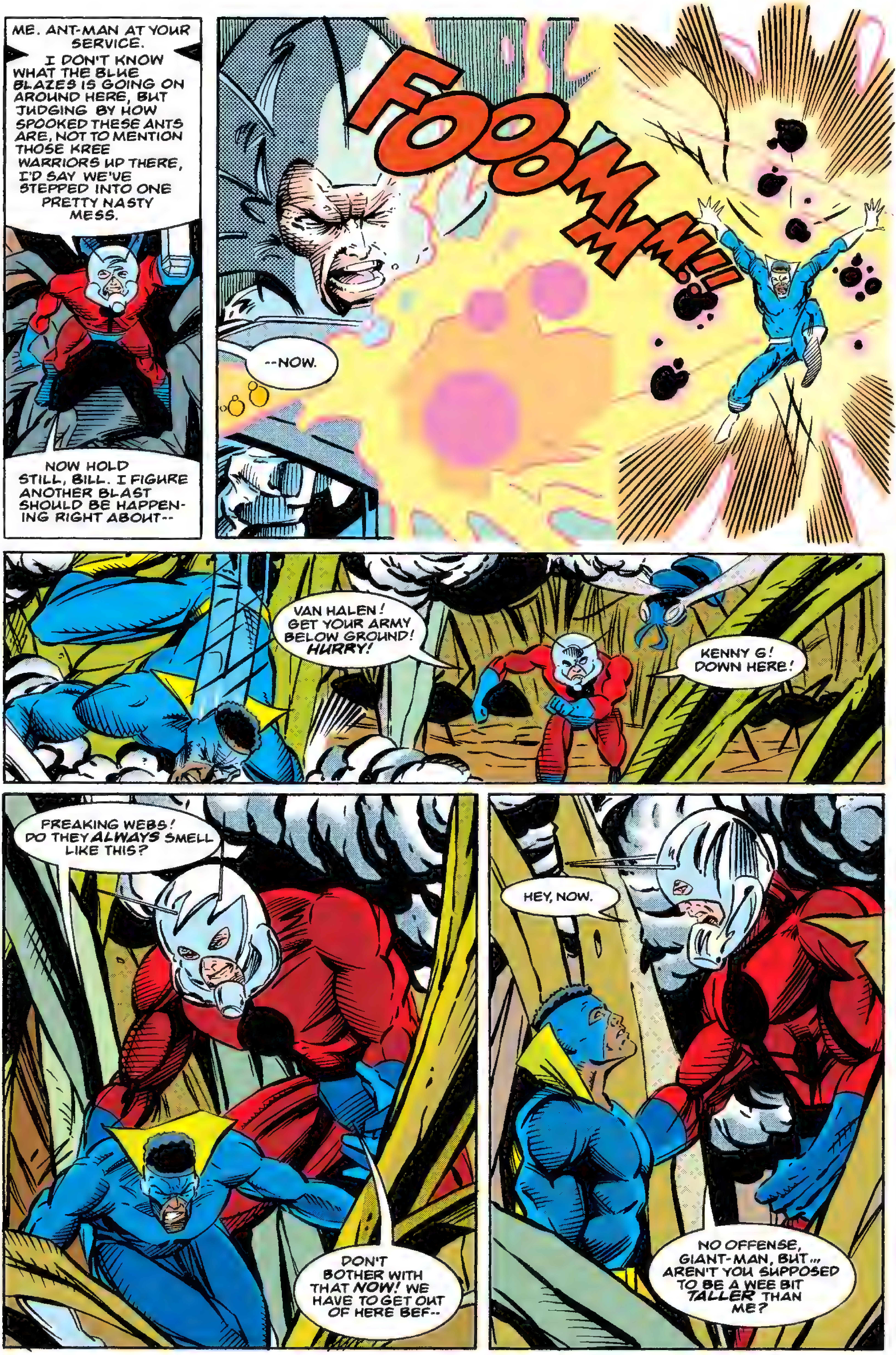
NO!! NO MORE!
I WILL NOT HAVE ANY MORE INNOCENT BLOOD ON MY HANDS!
LT. ARNOLD! THIS IS GIANT-MAN! LISTEN TO ME VERY CAREFULLY! GET READY TO GET YOUR SQUADRON OUT OF THERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
WE *CAN'T*, SIR! WE'RE CAUGHT IN THE TURBULENCE OF THE BLASTED MONSTER'S WING VIBRATIONS.
JUST GET READY, LIEUTENANT! IF MY POSTULATION IS ACCURATE, I MAY BE PROVIDING YOU WITH JUST THE REPRIEVE YOU'LL NEED.
COL. MANNING, SIR -- WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO?
COL. MANNING--?
JUST FOLLOW GIANT-MAN'S LEAD, LT. ARNOLD. *HE'S* IN CHARGE NOW.
ALL RIGHT, AVENGER. IT'S YOUR SHOW. I JUST HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT THE HECK YOU'RE DOING.
SO DO I, COLONEL. SO DO I.
SINCE THESE BUGS APPEAR TO REACT TO MY POSITIVE PARTICLE GAIN, PERHAPS *UPPING* MY USAGE WILL BE ENOUGH TO *DISTRACT* THE MANTIS FROM THE FIGHTERS.
Unnh-- THIS HAD BETTER WORK QUICKLY. GROWING BEYOND MY OPTIMUM 25-FOOT BATTLE SIZE PUTS EXCESSIVE *PRESSURE* ON MY CIRCULATORY SYSTEM.
I CAN ALREADY FEEL MY HEART STRAINING TO COMPENSATE FOR THE SUDDEN MASS GAIN.
HELLO, I THINK IT'S WORKING--
--PERHAPS *TOO* WELL. SEEMS LIKE THE DRAW TO MY PARTICLE GAIN ENERGY SUPERSEDES EVEN THE *HUNGER* DRIVE.

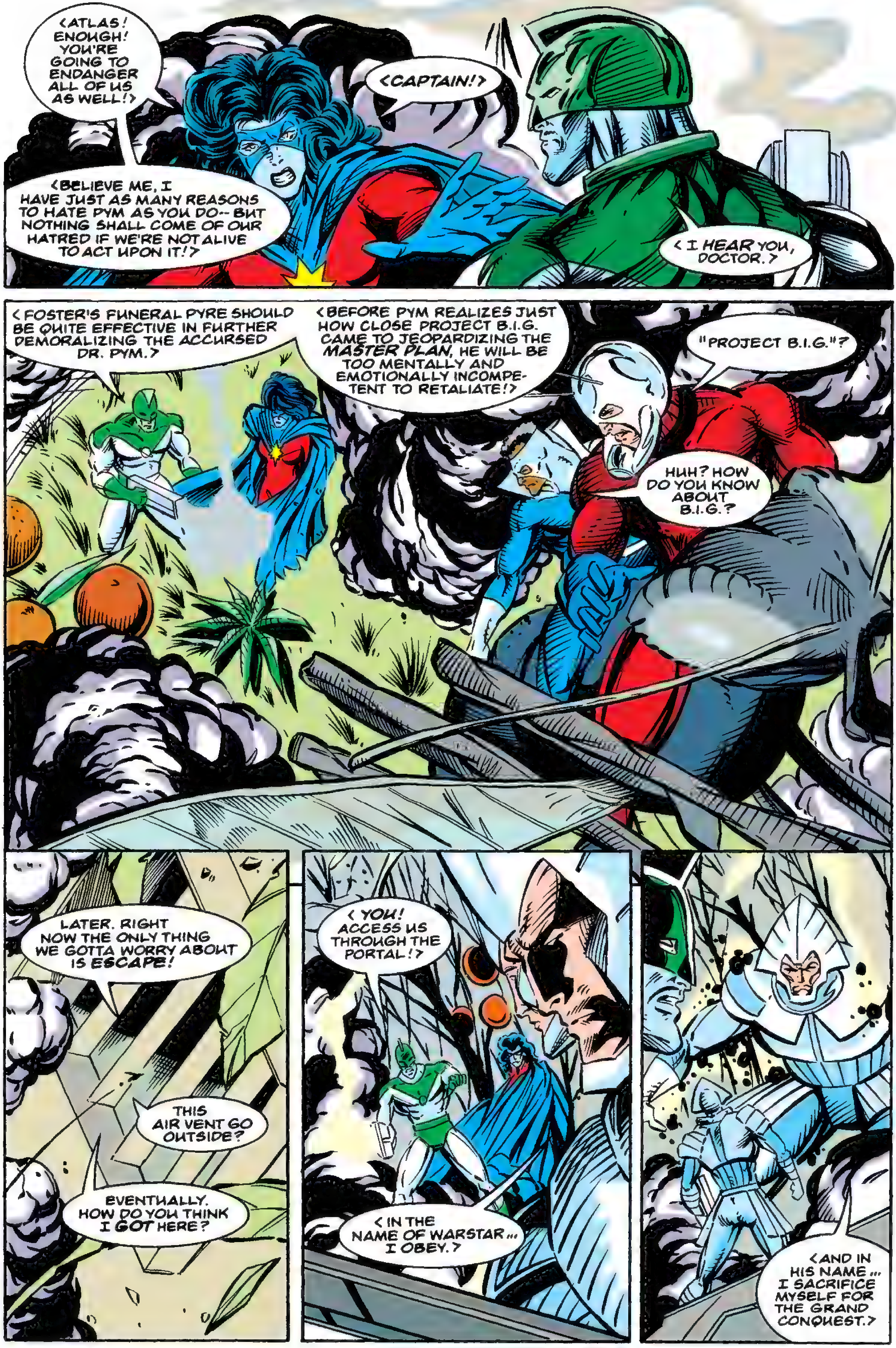

COL. MANNING! THE MANTIS IS ABANDONING ITS ATTACK ON US! IT'S SWOOPING DOWN TOWARD GIANT-MAN!
THEN WITHDRAW YOUR PLANES, LIEUTENANT. THERE'S NOTHING MORE WE CAN DO HERE!
GET YOUR BIRDS OUTTA THERE!
OKAY... HAVE TO TIME THIS JUST RIGHT... AND PRAY THAT I DON'T PASS OUT BEFORE IT'S OVER.
DOWN SIZE AT HYPER-ACCELERATED RATE--
--AND INSTANTLY SPRING BACK!
--GOD-- THAT HURT!

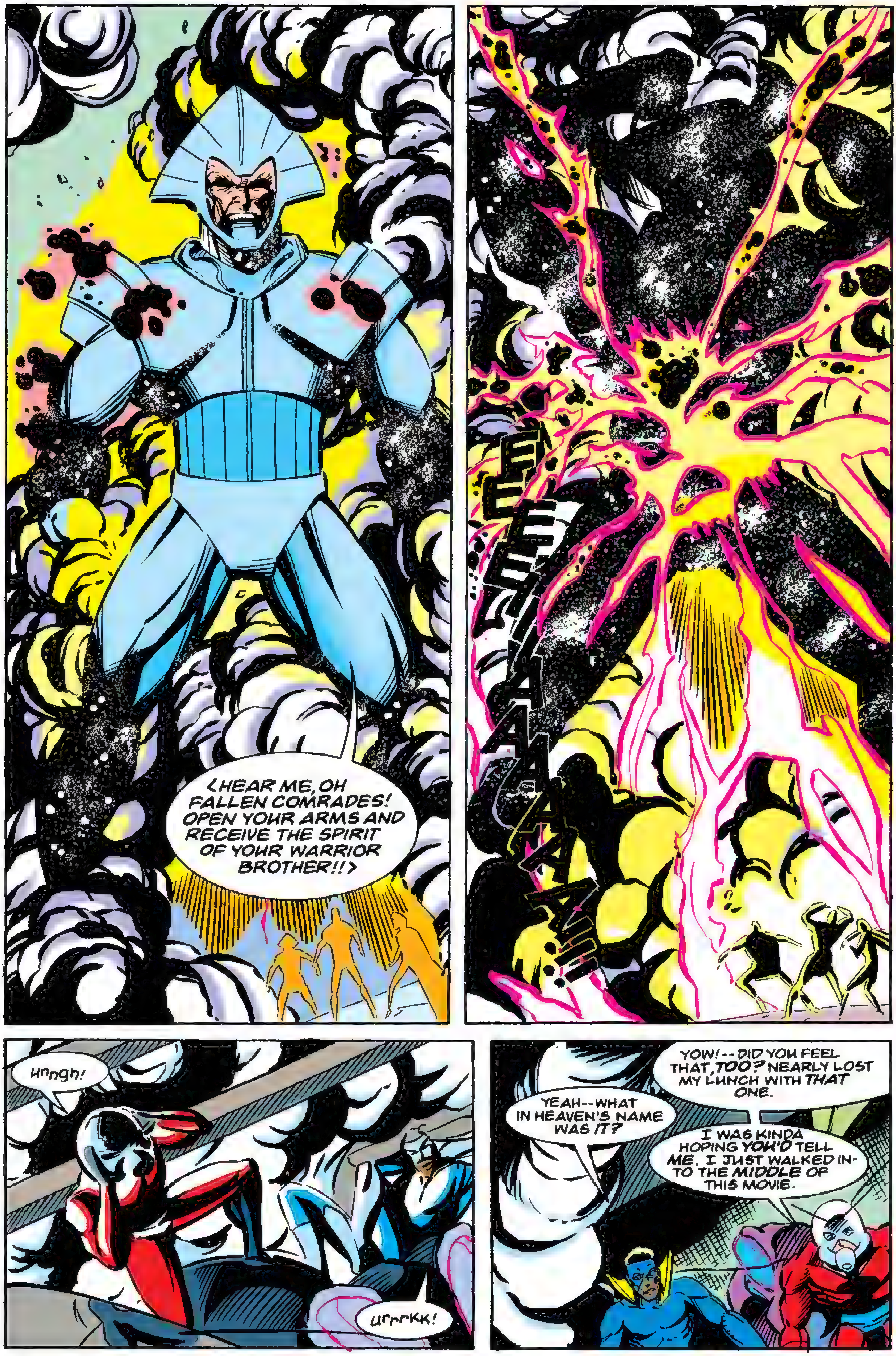

GOT TO GET... PAST THE PAIN...
JUST LONG ENOUGH... FOR ONE... FINAL...
...STRIKE--
HIGH-POCKETS... TO... B.I.G. BROTHER... COME IN... DR. FOSTER...
...NEED... TRANSPORT... ROVER... UNUSABLE... COME IN... BILL...
hank... help me... please... help...
...BILL? YOU SOUND... SO... FAR...
help me... helllp... meeee...

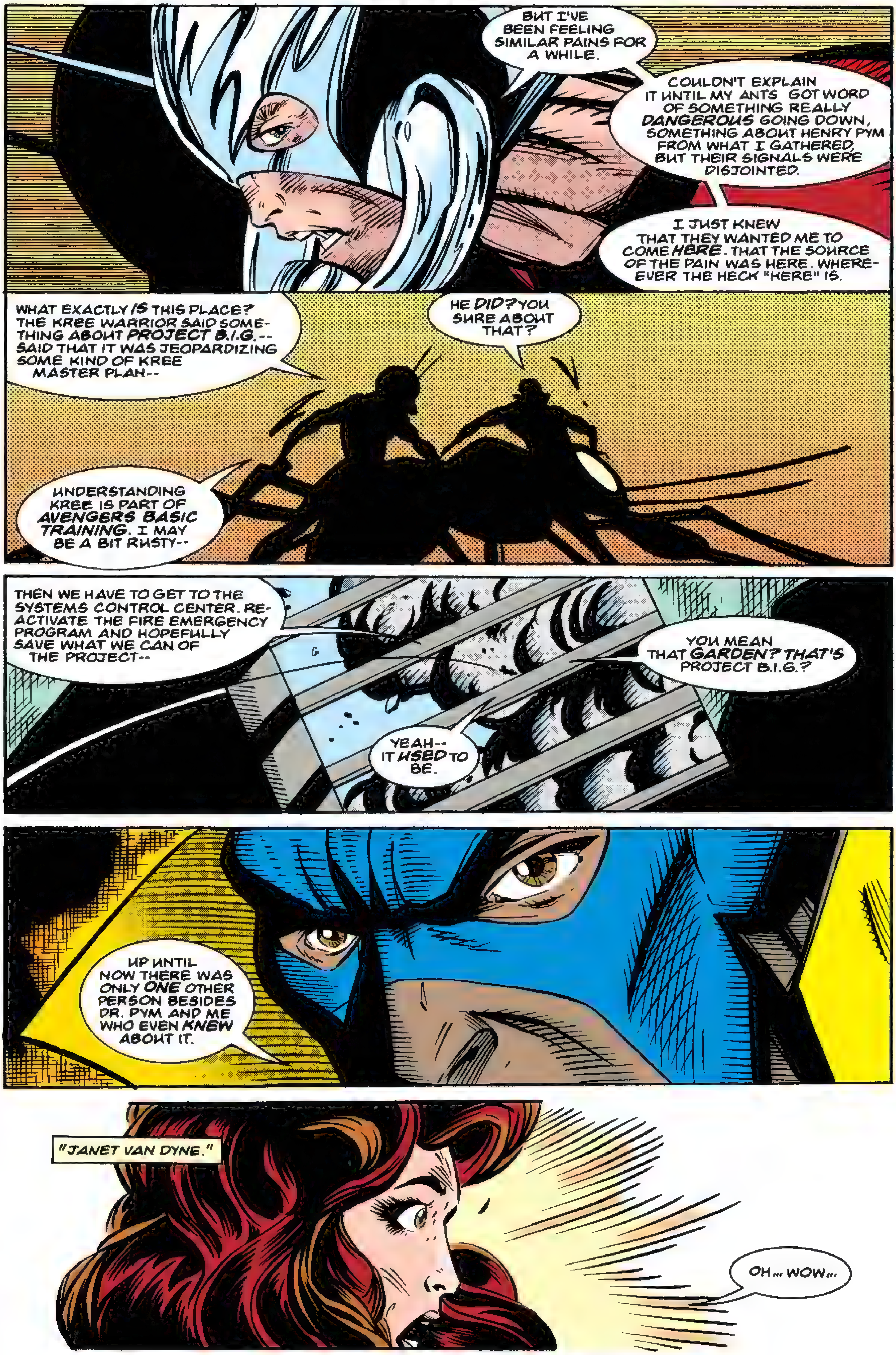
HANK... PLEASE, MAN--IF YOU'RE LISTENING... I REPEAT--
HELP!!
MAN, BILL, WHAT'S THE USE? THERE'S NO WAY PYM COULD GET HERE IN TIME. THAT BLACK WIDOW'S DEFINITELY HUNGRY, AND SHE ISN'T WAITING!
FOOOMMM
YOW! WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT!?
WHATEVER IT WAS, IT KNOCKED THAT SPIDER OFF THE WEB--
--AND RIGHT INTO THAT ANT WAR PARTY.
SERVES 'EM RIGHT FOR CHASING ME UP HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
WHOA! NOW WHAT?
SOMETHING--OR SOMEONE'S ATTACKING THE WIDOW. TOO DARK TO MAKE OUT--
--IT CAN'T BE AN ECLIPSE. HOW--?

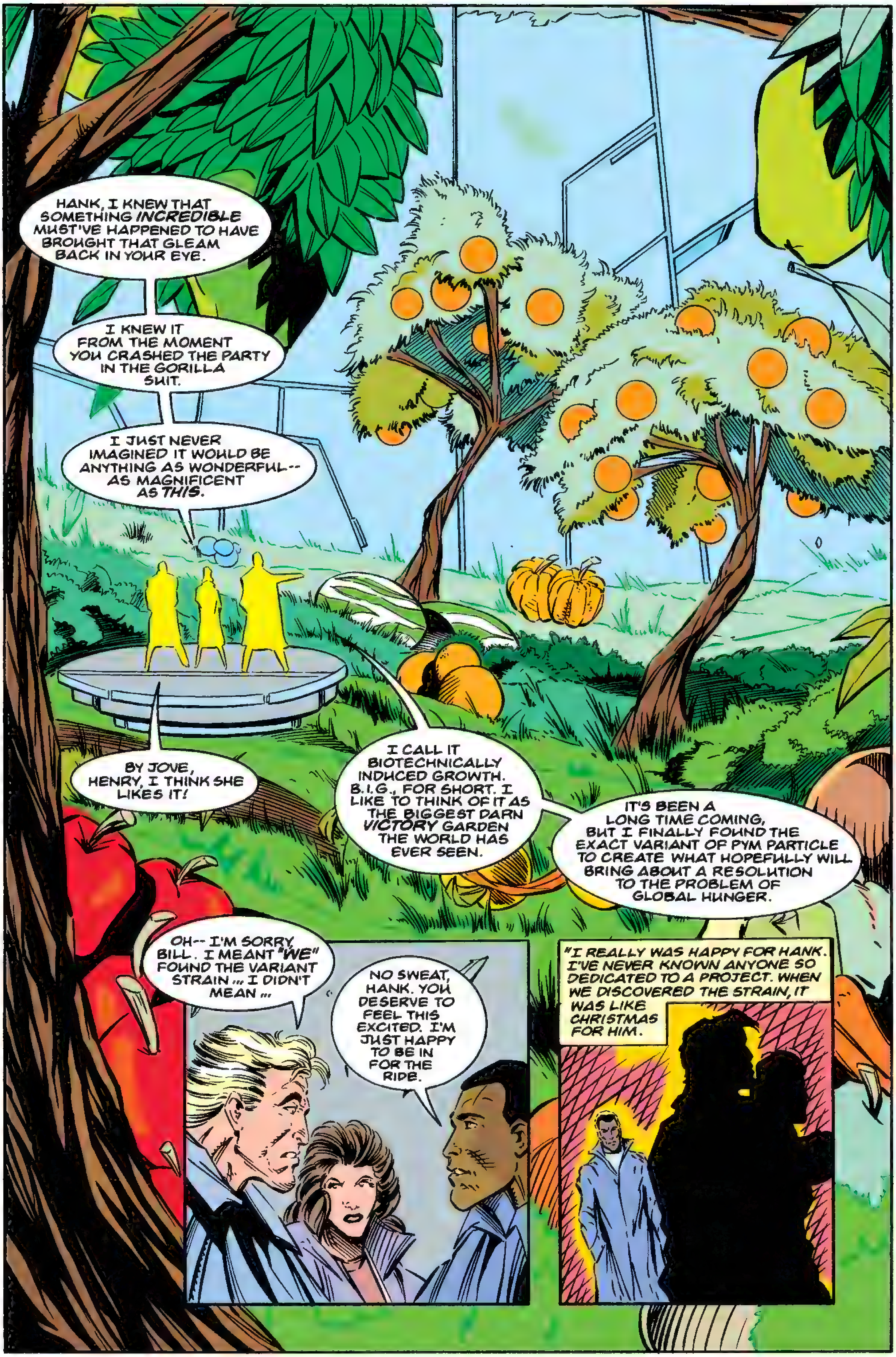

yipe.
<CURSE YOU, MINERVA. BECAUSE OF YOUR BUNGLING, WE MAY NEVER FIND THAT DARK-SKINNED INFIDEL!>*
*TRANSLATED FROM KREE.--RICHARD
<DON'T BLAME THIS ALL ON ME, CAPTAIN ATLAS. I FOLLOWED THE PROCEDURE EXACTLY AS IT WAS PRESCRIBED. HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT FOSTER'S REACTION WOULD BE SO ANTITHETICAL?>
<SO THIS GAMBIT FAILED. WE'LL HAVE TO OPTIMIZE OUR OTHER OPTIONS. NO BENEFIT SHALL BE GLEANED BY YOUR BLASTING ABOUT AT SOMETHING YOU CANNOT EVEN SEE.>
<YOU MISINTERPRET MY ACTIONS, DR. MINERVA.>
<THE DARK TERRAN IS IN THIS GARDEN, THAT IS CERTAIN. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO KNOW PRECISELY WHERE.>
<ALL THAT IS NECESSARY IS THAT HE NOT GET OUT ALIVE.>
FOOOMM!!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND A SINGLE WORD THEY'RE SAYING, DO YOU, DR. FOSTER?
'CAUSE, BELIEVE ME, IF YOU DID, YOU'D BE A LOT MORE SCARED THAN YOU ARE NOW.
YOU!?

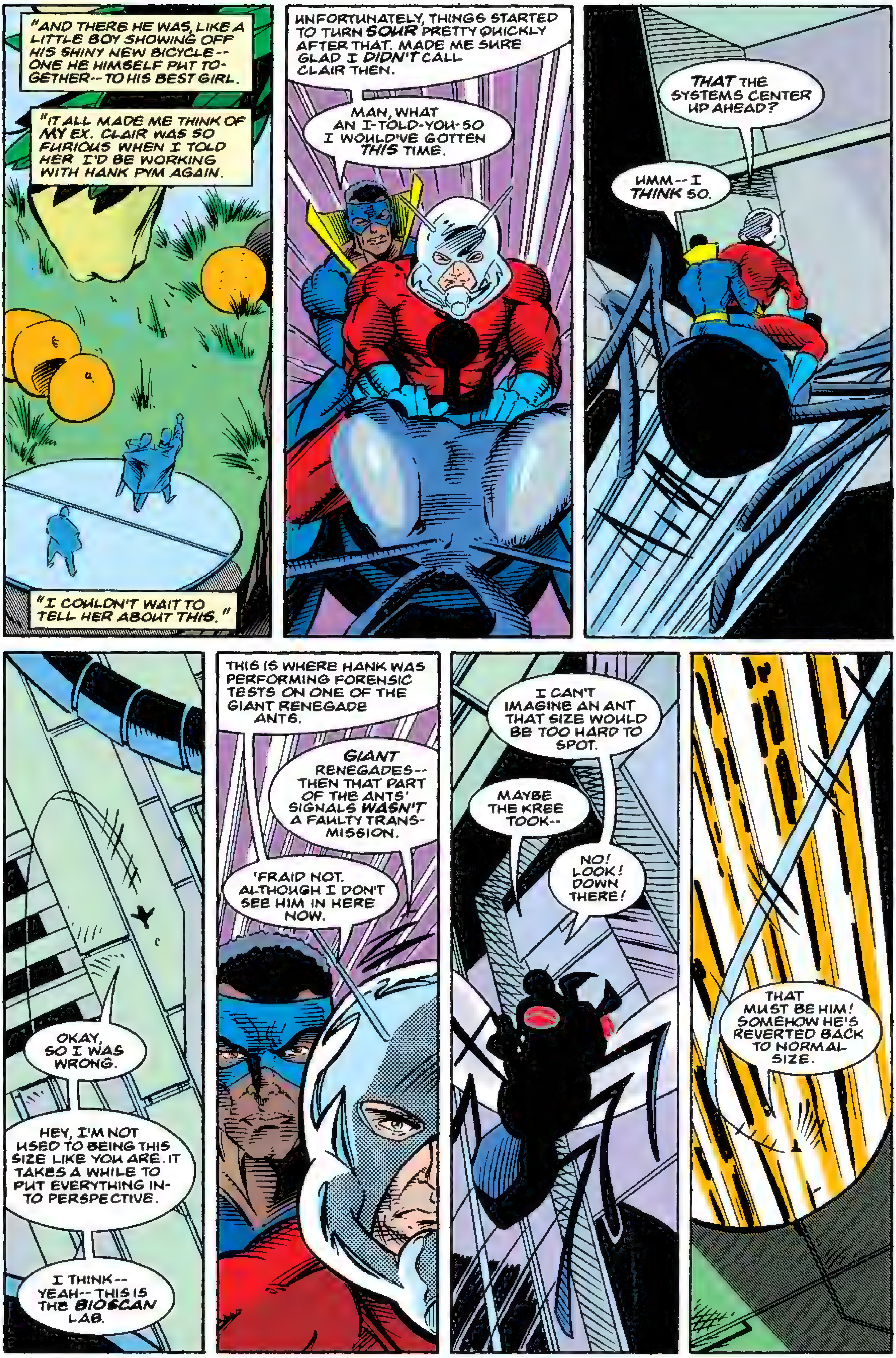

ME. ANT-MAN AT YOUR SERVICE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE BLUE BLAZES IS GOING ON AROUND HERE, BUT JUDGING BY HOW SPOOKED THESE ANTS ARE, NOT TO MENTION THOSE KREE WARRIORS UP THERE, I'D SAY WE'VE STEPPED INTO ONE PRETTY NASTY MESS.
NOW HOLD STILL, BILL. I FIGURE ANOTHER BLAST SHOULD BE HAPPENING RIGHT ABOUT--
--NOW.
FOOOMMM!!
VAN HALEN! GET YOUR ARMY BELOW GROUND! HURRY!
KENNY G! DOWN HERE!
FREAKING WEBS! DO THEY ALWAYS SMELL LIKE THIS?
DON'T BOTHER WITH THAT NOW! WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE BEF--
HEY, NOW.
NO OFFENSE, GIANT-MAN, BUT... AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE A WEE BIT TALLER THAN ME?

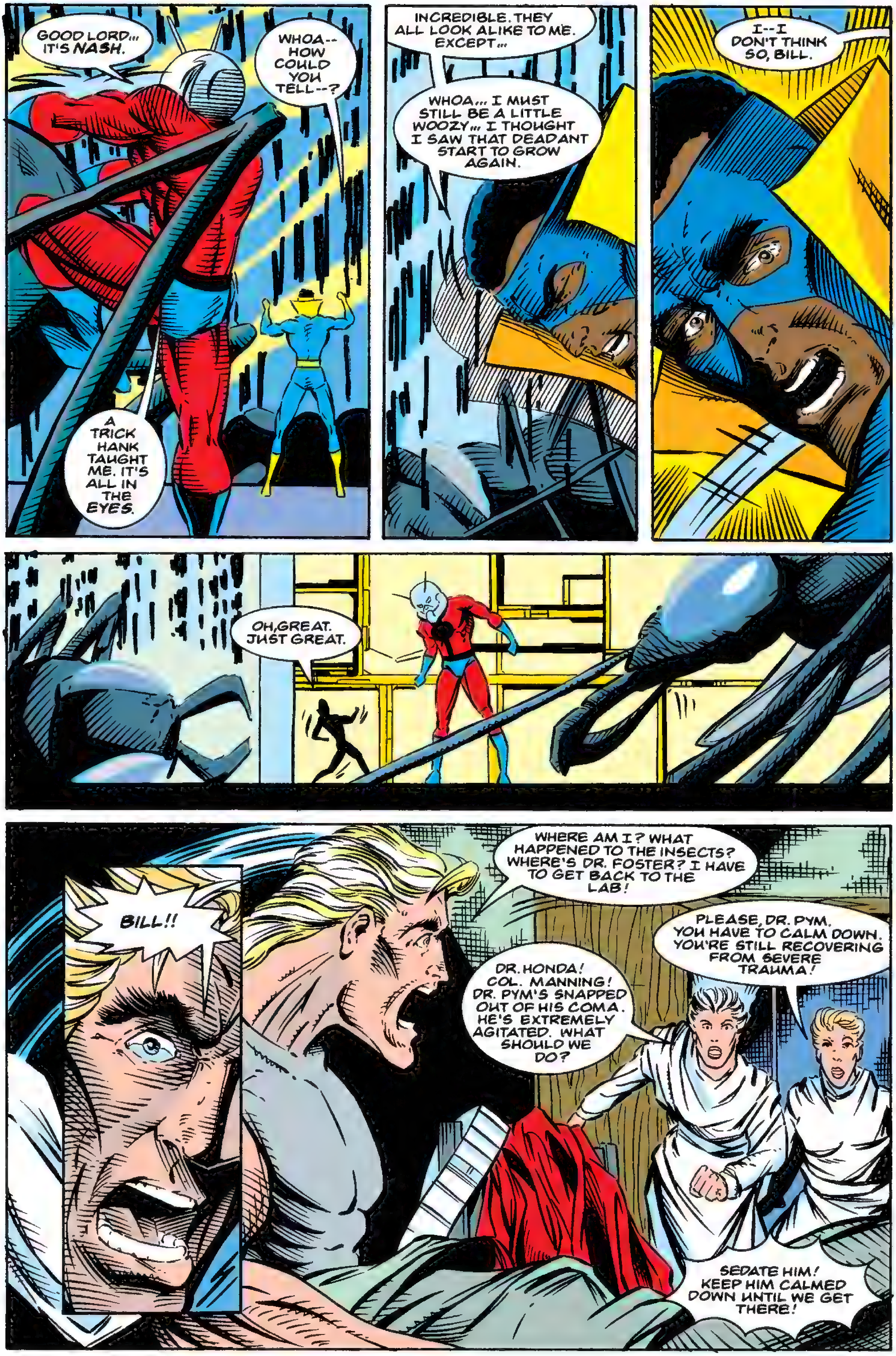

<ATLAS! ENOUGH! YOU'RE GOING TO ENDANGER ALL OF US AS WELL!>
<CAPTAIN!>
<BELIEVE ME, I HAVE JUST AS MANY REASONS TO HATE PYM AS YOU DO-- BUT NOTHING SHALL COME OF OUR HATRED IF WE'RE NOT ALIVE TO ACT UPON IT!>
< I HEAR YOU, DOCTOR.>
< FOSTER'S FUNERAL PYRE SHOULD BE QUITE EFFECTIVE IN FURTHER DEMORALIZING THE ACCURSED DR. PYM.>
<BEFORE PYM REALIZES JUST HOW CLOSE PROJECT B.I.G. CAME TO JEOPARDIZING THE MASTER PLAN, HE WILL BE TOO MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY INCOMPETENT TO RETALIATE!>
"PROJECT B.I.G."?
HUH? HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT B.I.G.?
LATER. RIGHT NOW THE ONLY THING WE GOTTA WORRY ABOUT IS ESCAPE!
THIS AIR VENT GO OUTSIDE?
EVENTUALLY. HOW DO YOU THINK I GOT HERE?
< YOU! ACCESS US THROUGH THE PORTAL!>
< IN THE NAME OF WARSTAR... I OBEY.>
<AND IN HIS NAME... I SACRIFICE MYSELF FOR THE GRAND CONQUEST.>

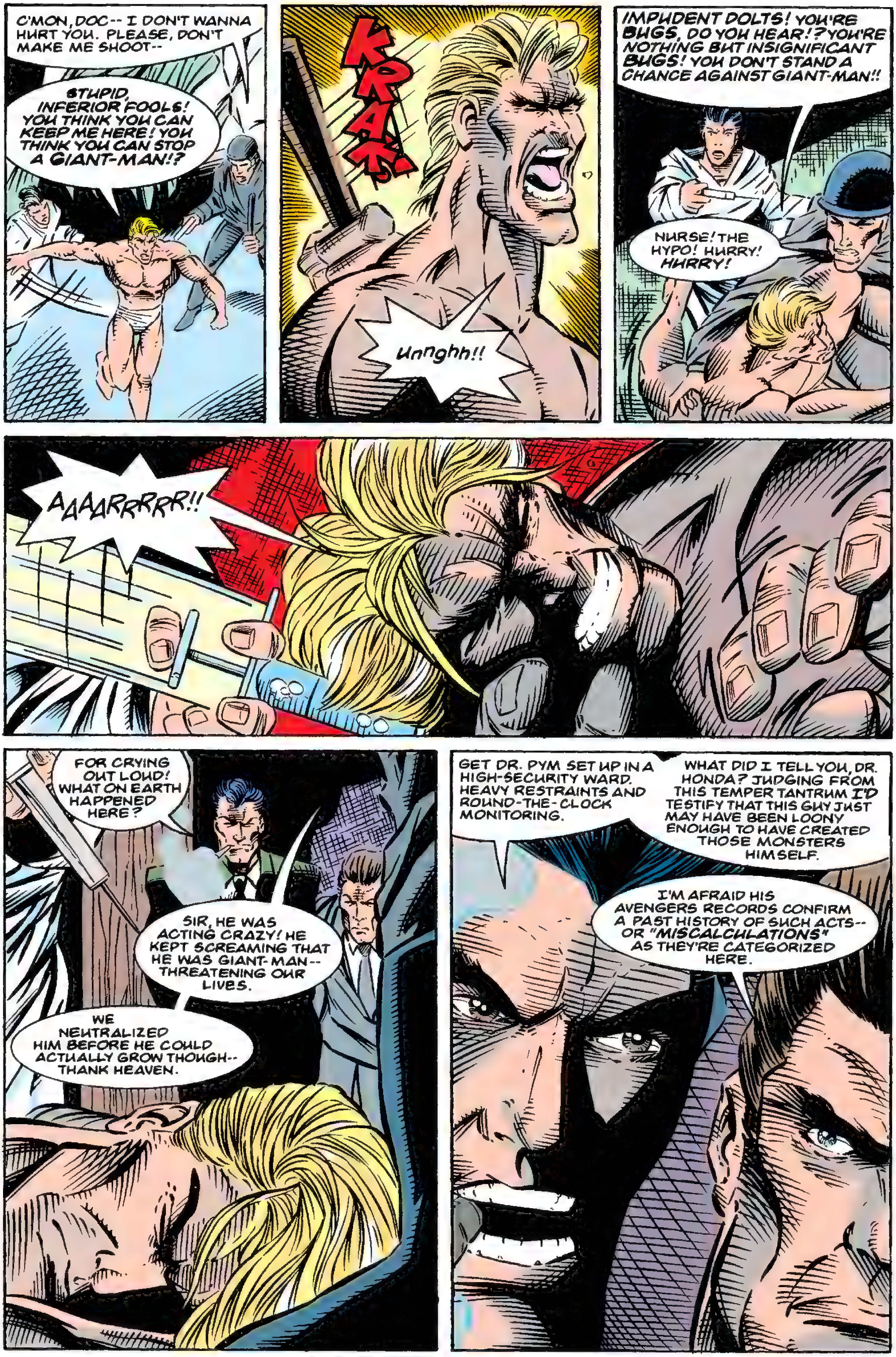

‹HEAR ME, OH FALLEN COMRADES! OPEN YOUR ARMS AND RECEIVE THE SPIRIT OF YOUR WARRIOR BROTHER!!›
EEESHAAAAAAM!!
unngh!
urrrKK!
YOW!--DID YOU FEEL THAT, TOO? NEARLY LOST MY LUNCH WITH THAT ONE.
YEAH--WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME WAS IT?
I WAS KINDA HOPING YOU'D TELL ME. I JUST WALKED INTO THE MIDDLE OF THIS MOVIE.

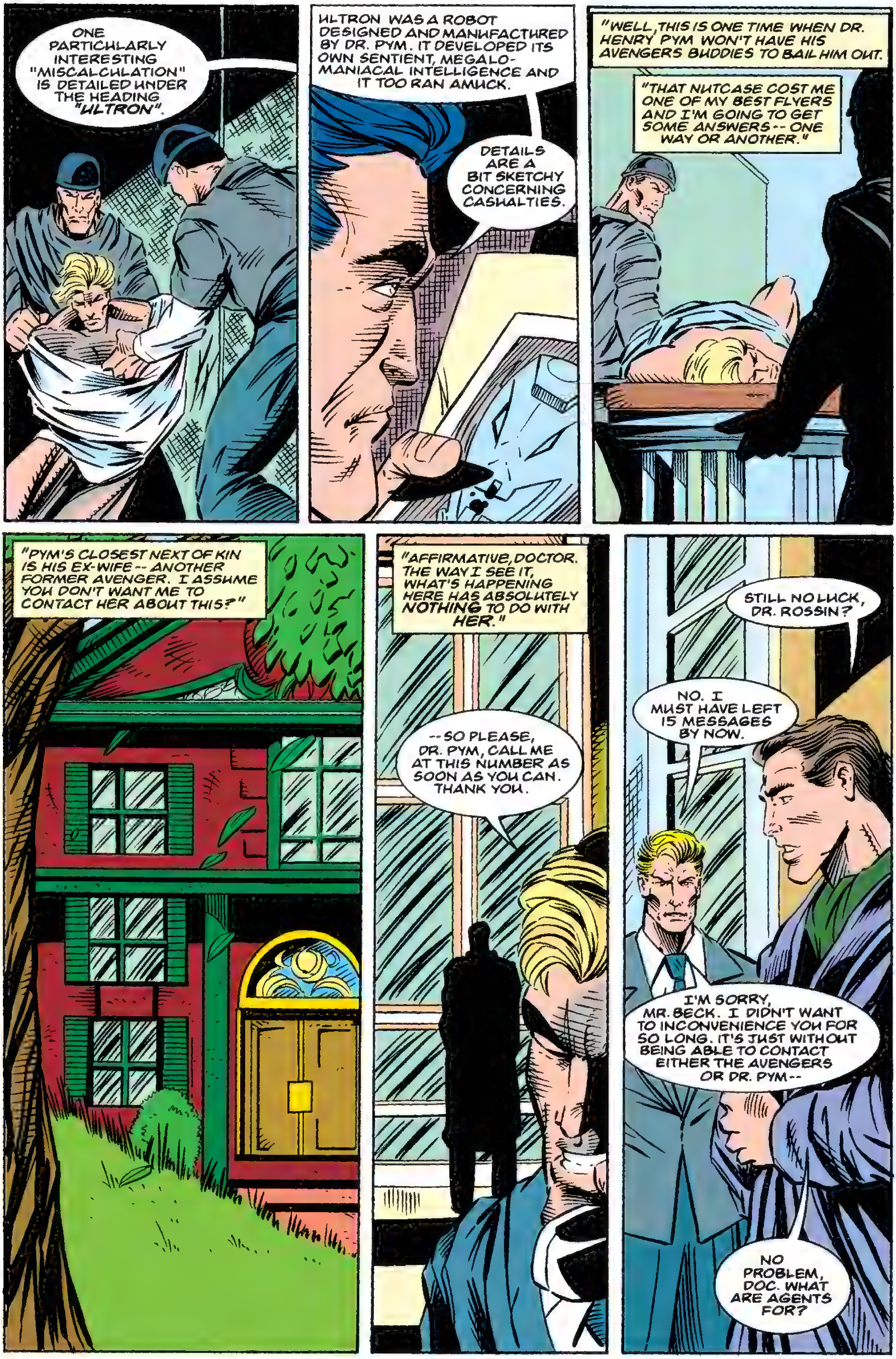

BUT I'VE BEEN FEELING SIMILAR PAINS FOR A WHILE.
COULDN'T EXPLAIN IT UNTIL MY ANTS GOT WORD OF SOMETHING REALLY *DANGEROUS* GOING DOWN, SOMETHING ABOUT HENRY PYM FROM WHAT I GATHERED, BUT THEIR SIGNALS WERE DISJOINTED.
I JUST KNEW THAT THEY WANTED ME TO COME *HERE*. THAT THE SOURCE OF THE PAIN WAS HERE. WHEREVER THE HECK "HERE" IS.
WHAT EXACTLY *IS* THIS PLACE? THE KREE WARRIOR SAID SOMETHING ABOUT *PROJECT B.I.G.*-- SAID THAT IT WAS JEOPARDIZING SOME KIND OF KREE MASTER PLAN--
HE *DID?* YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
UNDERSTANDING KREE IS PART OF *AVENGERS BASIC TRAINING*. I MAY BE A BIT RUSTY--
THEN WE HAVE TO GET TO THE SYSTEMS CONTROL CENTER, REACTIVATE THE FIRE EMERGENCY PROGRAM AND HOPEFULLY SAVE WHAT WE CAN OF THE PROJECT--
YOU MEAN THAT *GARDEN? THAT'S* PROJECT B.I.G.?
YEAH-- IT *USED* TO BE.
UP UNTIL NOW THERE WAS ONLY *ONE* OTHER PERSON BESIDES DR. PYM AND ME WHO EVEN *KNEW* ABOUT IT.
"JANET VAN DYNE."
OH... WOW...

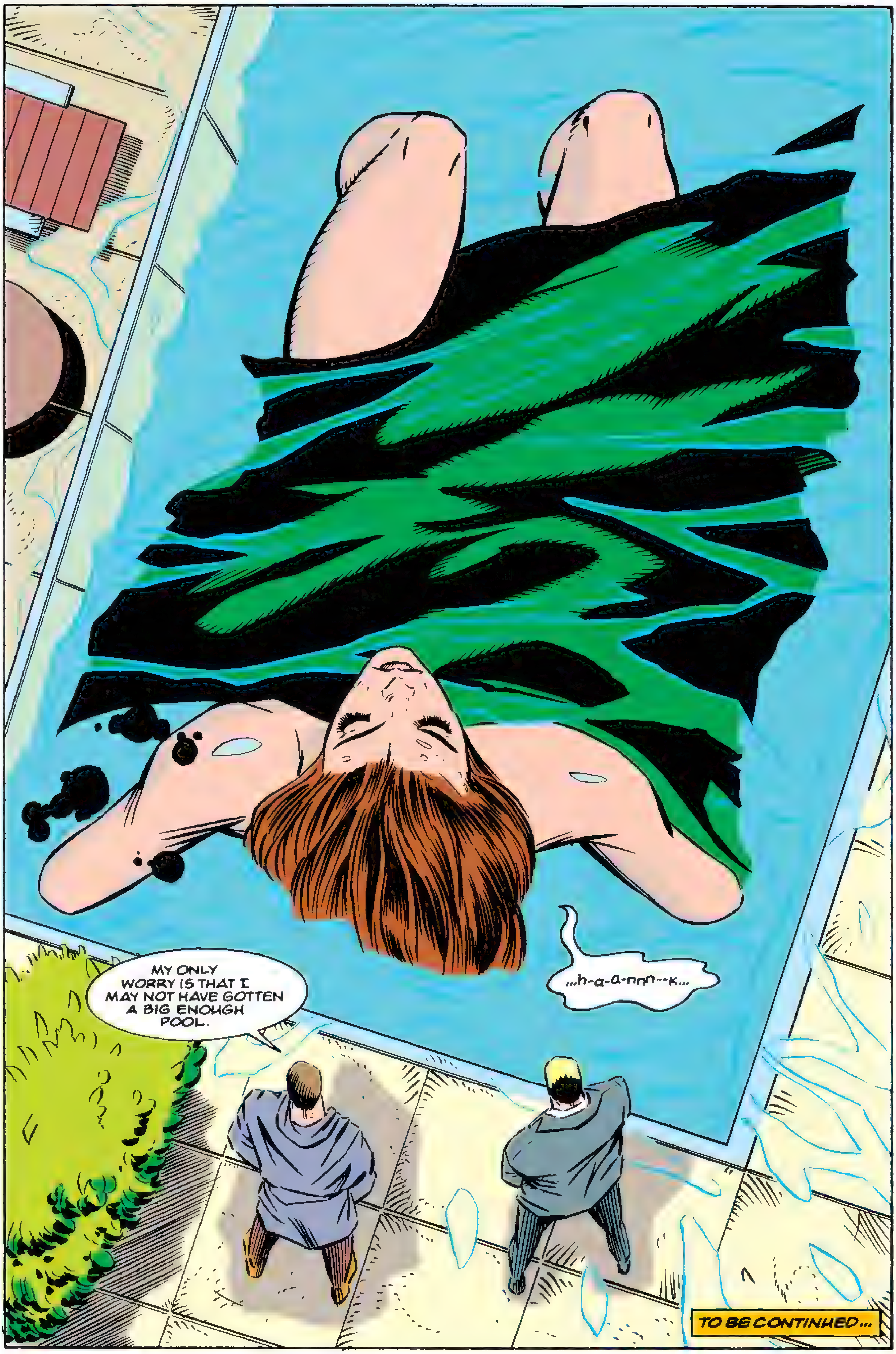

HANK, I KNEW THAT SOMETHING *INCREDIBLE* MUST'VE HAPPENED TO HAVE BROUGHT THAT GLEAM BACK IN YOUR EYE.
I KNEW IT FROM THE MOMENT YOU CRASHED THE PARTY IN THE GORILLA SUIT.
I JUST NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD BE ANYTHING AS WONDERFUL-- AS MAGNIFICENT AS *THIS*.
BY JOVE, HENRY, I THINK SHE LIKES IT!
I CALL IT BIOTECHNICALLY INDUCED GROWTH. B.I.G., FOR SHORT. I LIKE TO THINK OF IT AS THE BIGGEST DARN *VICTORY* GARDEN THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, BUT I FINALLY FOUND THE EXACT VARIANT OF PYM PARTICLE TO CREATE WHAT HOPEFULLY WILL BRING ABOUT A RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF GLOBAL HUNGER.
OH-- I'M SORRY, BILL. I MEANT *"WE"* FOUND THE VARIANT STRAIN... I DIDN'T MEAN...
NO SWEAT, HANK. YOU DESERVE TO FEEL THIS EXCITED. I'M JUST HAPPY TO BE IN FOR THE RIDE.
"I REALLY WAS HAPPY FOR HANK. I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYONE SO DEDICATED TO A PROJECT. WHEN WE DISCOVERED THE STRAIN, IT WAS LIKE CHRISTMAS FOR HIM.


"AND THERE HE WAS, LIKE A LITTLE BOY SHOWING OFF HIS SHINY NEW BICYCLE-- ONE HE HIMSELF PUT TOGETHER-- TO HIS BEST GIRL.
"IT ALL MADE ME THINK OF MY EX. CLAIR WAS SO FURIOUS WHEN I TOLD HER I'D BE WORKING WITH HANK PYM AGAIN.
"I COULDN'T WAIT TO TELL HER ABOUT THIS."
UNFORTUNATELY, THINGS STARTED TO TURN SOUR PRETTY QUICKLY AFTER THAT. MADE ME SURE GLAD I DIDN'T CALL CLAIR THEN.
MAN, WHAT AN I-TOLD-YOU-SO I WOULD'VE GOTTEN THIS TIME.
THAT THE SYSTEMS CENTER UP AHEAD?
UMM-- I THINK SO.
OKAY, SO I WAS WRONG.
HEY, I'M NOT USED TO BEING THIS SIZE LIKE YOU ARE. IT TAKES A WHILE TO PUT EVERYTHING INTO PERSPECTIVE.
I THINK-- YEAH-- THIS IS THE BIOSCAN LAB.
THIS IS WHERE HANK WAS PERFORMING FORENSIC TESTS ON ONE OF THE GIANT RENEGADE ANTS.
GIANT RENEGADES-- THEN THAT PART OF THE ANTS' SIGNALS WASN'T A FAULTY TRANSMISSION.
'FRAID NOT. ALTHOUGH I DON'T SEE HIM IN HERE NOW.
I CAN'T IMAGINE AN ANT THAT SIZE WOULD BE TOO HARD TO SPOT.
MAYBE THE KREE TOOK--
NO! LOOK! DOWN THERE!
THAT MUST BE HIM! SOMEHOW HE'S REVERTED BACK TO NORMAL SIZE.

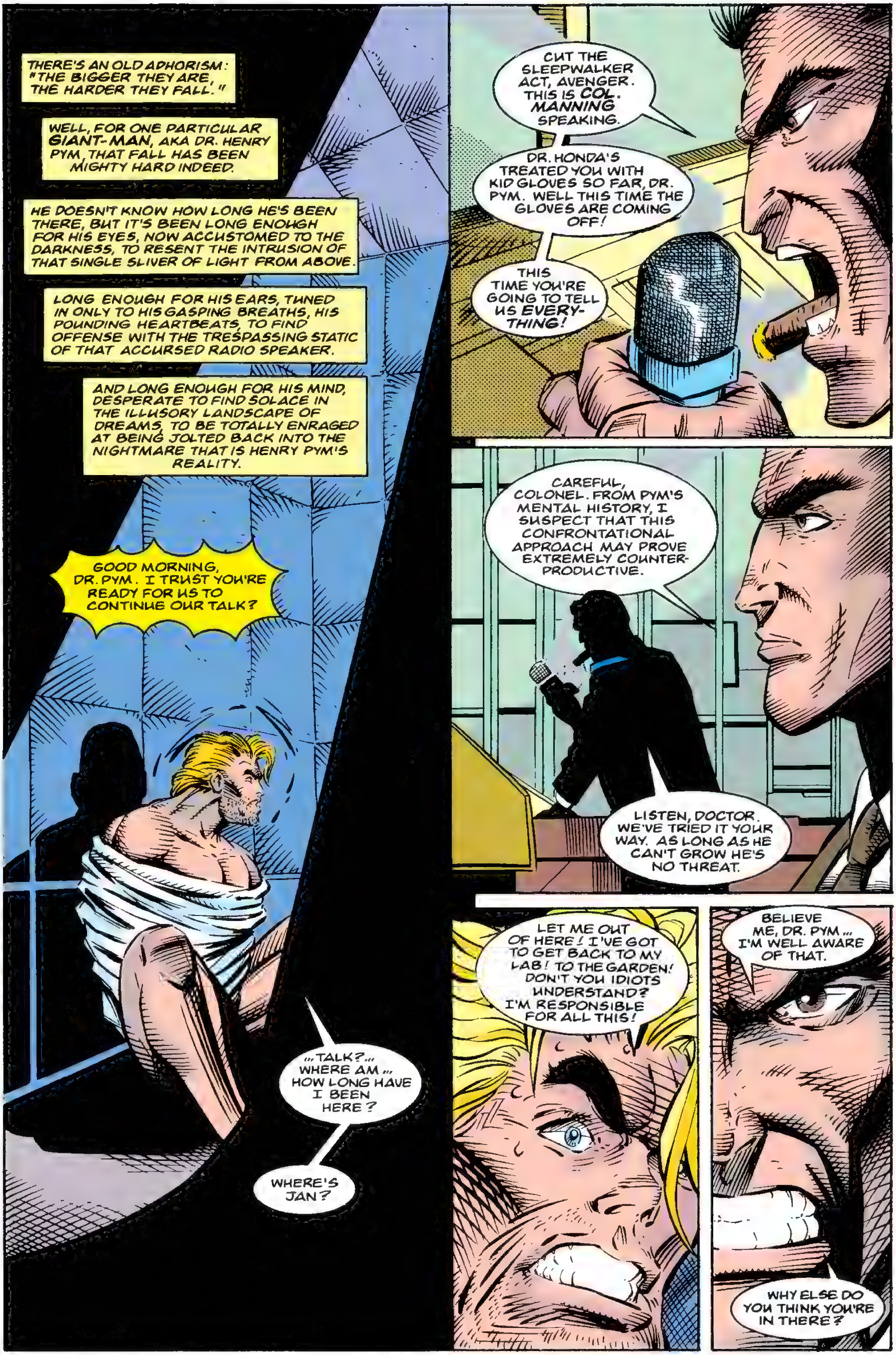

GOOD LORD... IT'S NASH.
WHOA-- HOW COULD YOU TELL--?
A TRICK HANK TAUGHT ME. IT'S ALL IN THE EYES.
INCREDIBLE. THEY ALL LOOK ALIKE TO ME. EXCEPT...
WHOA... I MUST STILL BE A LITTLE WOOZY... I THOUGHT I SAW THAT DEAD ANT START TO GROW AGAIN.
I--I DON'T THINK SO, BILL.
OH, GREAT. JUST GREAT.
BILL!!
WHERE AM I? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE INSECTS? WHERE'S DR. FOSTER? I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE LAB!
DR. HONDA! COL. MANNING! DR. PYM'S SNAPPED OUT OF HIS COMA. HE'S EXTREMELY AGITATED. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
PLEASE, DR. PYM. YOU HAVE TO CALM DOWN. YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING FROM SEVERE TRAUMA!
SEDATE HIM! KEEP HIM CALMED DOWN UNTIL WE GET THERE!

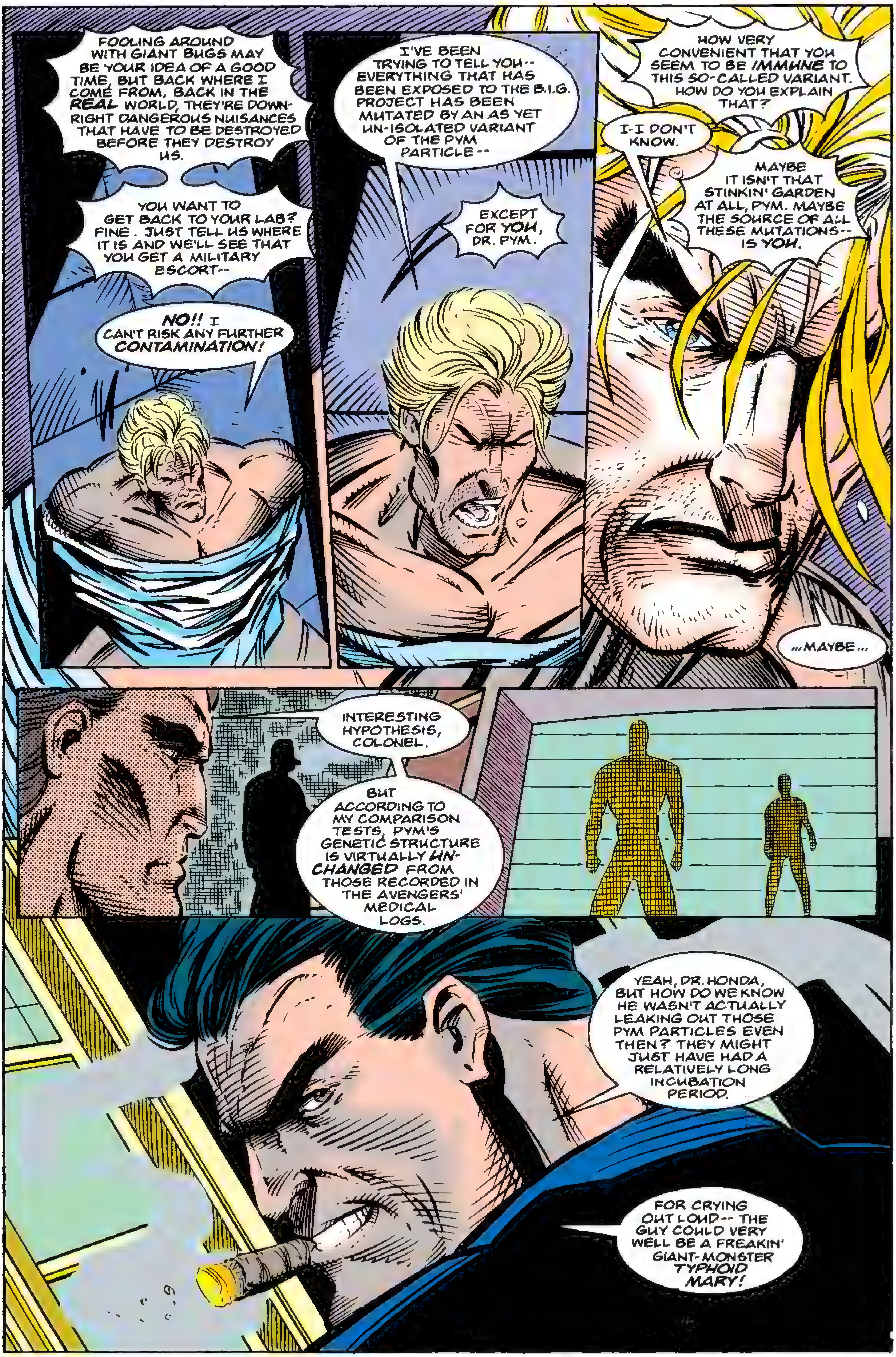

C'MON, DOC-- I DON'T WANNA HURT YOU. PLEASE, DON'T MAKE ME SHOOT--
STUPID, INFERIOR FOOLS! YOU THINK YOU CAN KEEP ME HERE! YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP A GIANT-MAN!?
KRAK!
Unnghh!!
IMPUDENT DOLTS! YOU'RE BUGS, DO YOU HEAR!? YOU'RE NOTHING BUT INSIGNIFICANT BUGS! YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST GIANT-MAN!!
NURSE! THE HYPO! HURRY! HURRY!
AAAARRRRR!!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED HERE?
SIR, HE WAS ACTING CRAZY! HE KEPT SCREAMING THAT HE WAS GIANT-MAN-- THREATENING OUR LIVES.
WE NEUTRALIZED HIM BEFORE HE COULD ACTUALLY GROW THOUGH-- THANK HEAVEN.
GET DR. PYM SET UP IN A HIGH-SECURITY WARD. HEAVY RESTRAINTS AND ROUND-THE-CLOCK MONITORING.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU, DR. HONDA? JUDGING FROM THIS TEMPER TANTRUM I'D TESTIFY THAT THIS GUY JUST MAY HAVE BEEN LOONY ENOUGH TO HAVE CREATED THOSE MONSTERS HIMSELF.
I'M AFRAID HIS AVENGERS RECORDS CONFIRM A PAST HISTORY OF SUCH ACTS-- OR "MISCALCULATIONS" AS THEY'RE CATEGORIZED HERE.

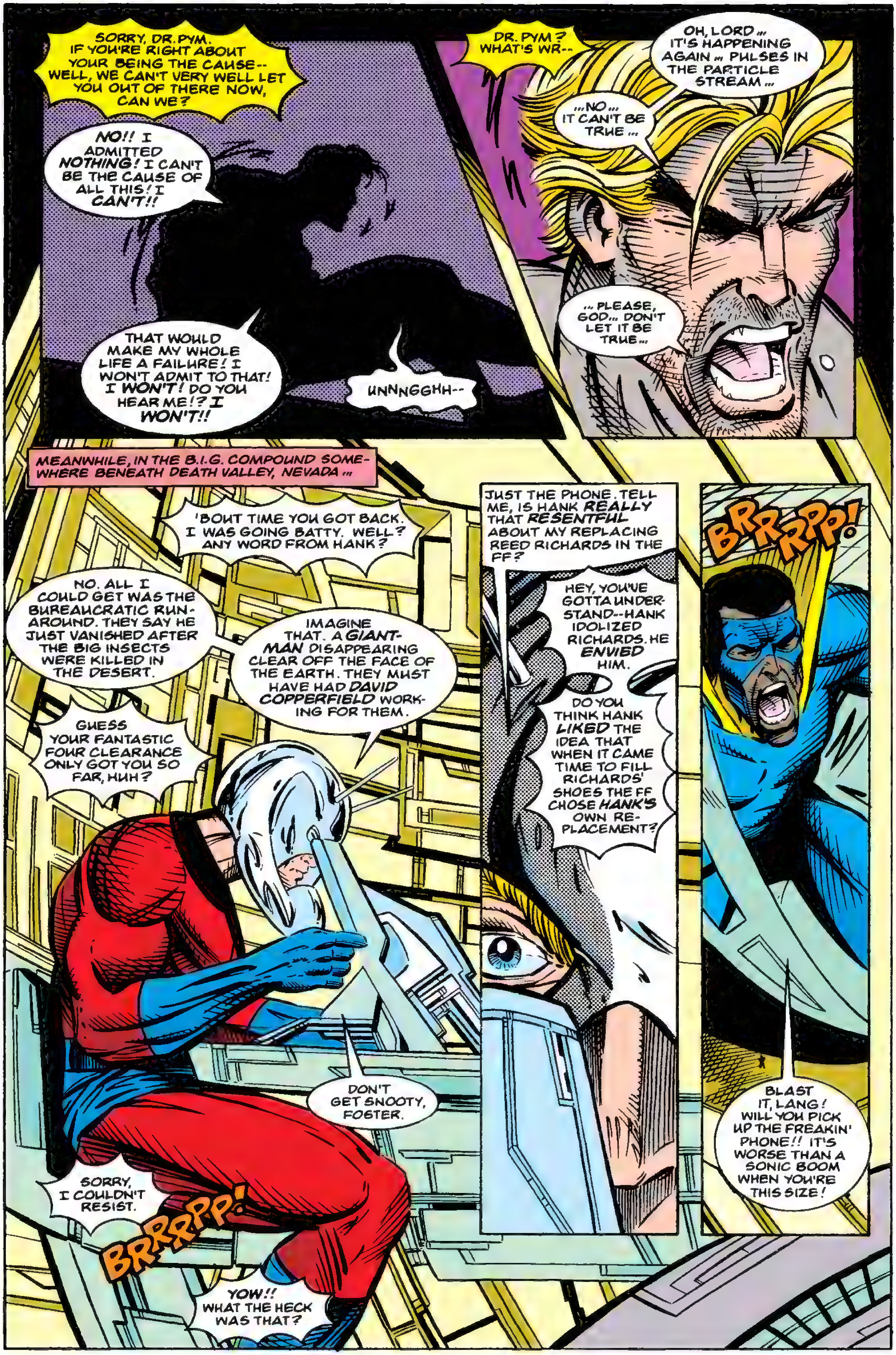

ONE PARTICULARLY INTERESTING "MISCALCULATION" IS DETAILED UNDER THE HEADING *"ULTRON"*.
ULTRON WAS A ROBOT DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED BY DR. PYM. IT DEVELOPED ITS OWN SENTIENT, MEGALOMANIACAL INTELLIGENCE AND IT TOO RAN AMUCK.
DETAILS ARE A BIT SKETCHY CONCERNING CASUALTIES.
"WELL, THIS IS ONE TIME WHEN DR. HENRY PYM WON'T HAVE HIS AVENGERS BUDDIES TO BAIL HIM OUT.
"THAT NUTCASE COST ME ONE OF MY BEST FLYERS AND I'M GOING TO GET SOME ANSWERS -- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER."
"PYM'S CLOSEST NEXT OF KIN IS HIS EX-WIFE -- ANOTHER FORMER AVENGER. I ASSUME YOU DON'T WANT ME TO CONTACT HER ABOUT THIS?"
"AFFIRMATIVE, DOCTOR. THE WAY I SEE IT, WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE HAS ABSOLUTELY ***NOTHING*** *TO DO WITH* ***HER****."*
--SO PLEASE, DR. PYM, CALL ME AT THIS NUMBER AS SOON AS YOU CAN. THANK YOU.
STILL NO LUCK, DR. ROSSIN?
NO. I MUST HAVE LEFT 15 MESSAGES BY NOW.
I'M SORRY, MR. BECK. I DIDN'T WANT TO INCONVENIENCE YOU FOR SO LONG. IT'S JUST WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO CONTACT EITHER THE AVENGERS OR DR. PYM--
NO PROBLEM, DOC. WHAT ARE AGENTS FOR?

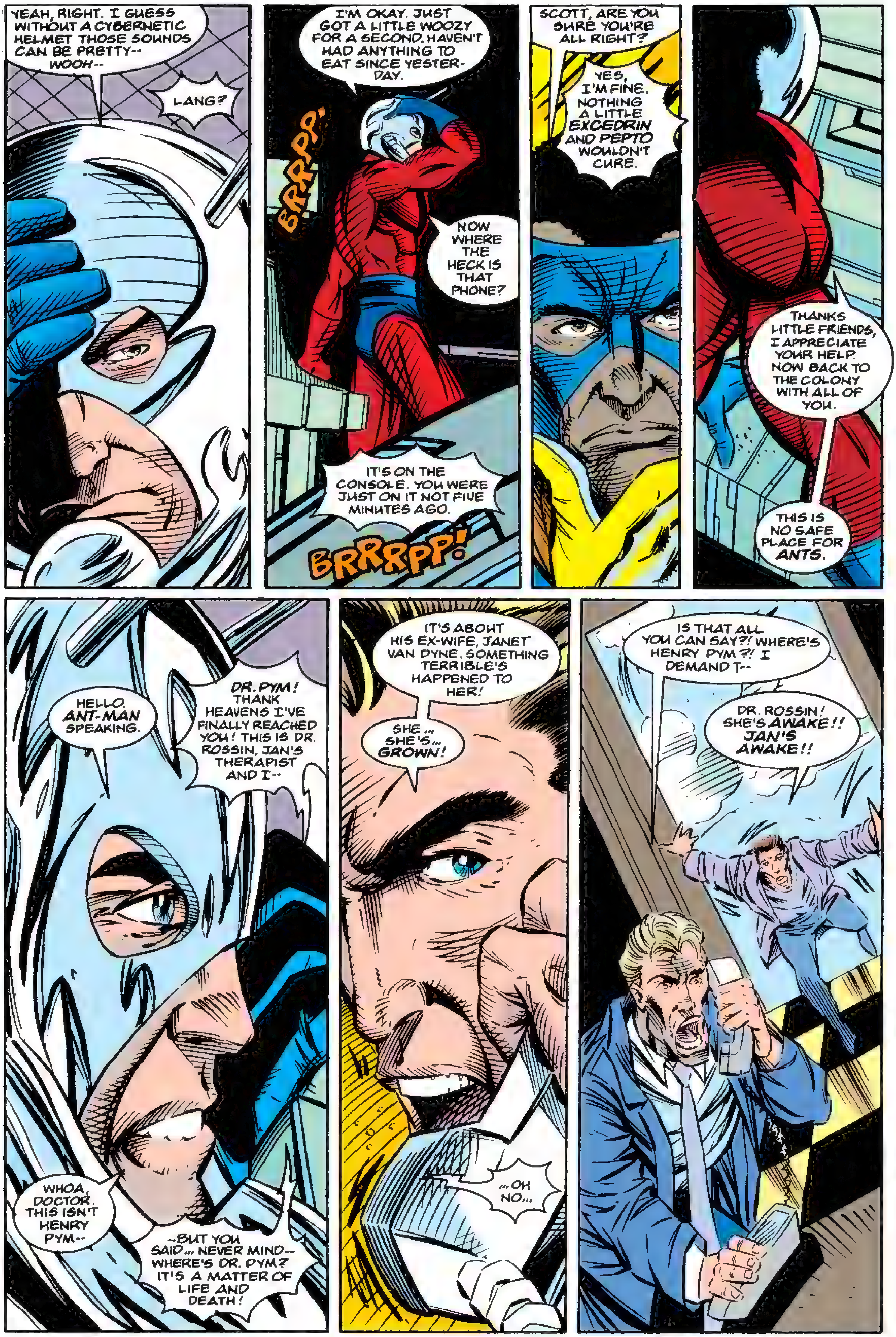

...h-a-a-nnn--k...
MY ONLY WORRY IS THAT I MAY NOT HAVE GOTTEN A BIG ENOUGH POOL.
TO BE CONTINUED...

MARVEL COMICS
381
DEC
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
AVENGERS®
GIANT MAN™
DOUBLE FEATURE

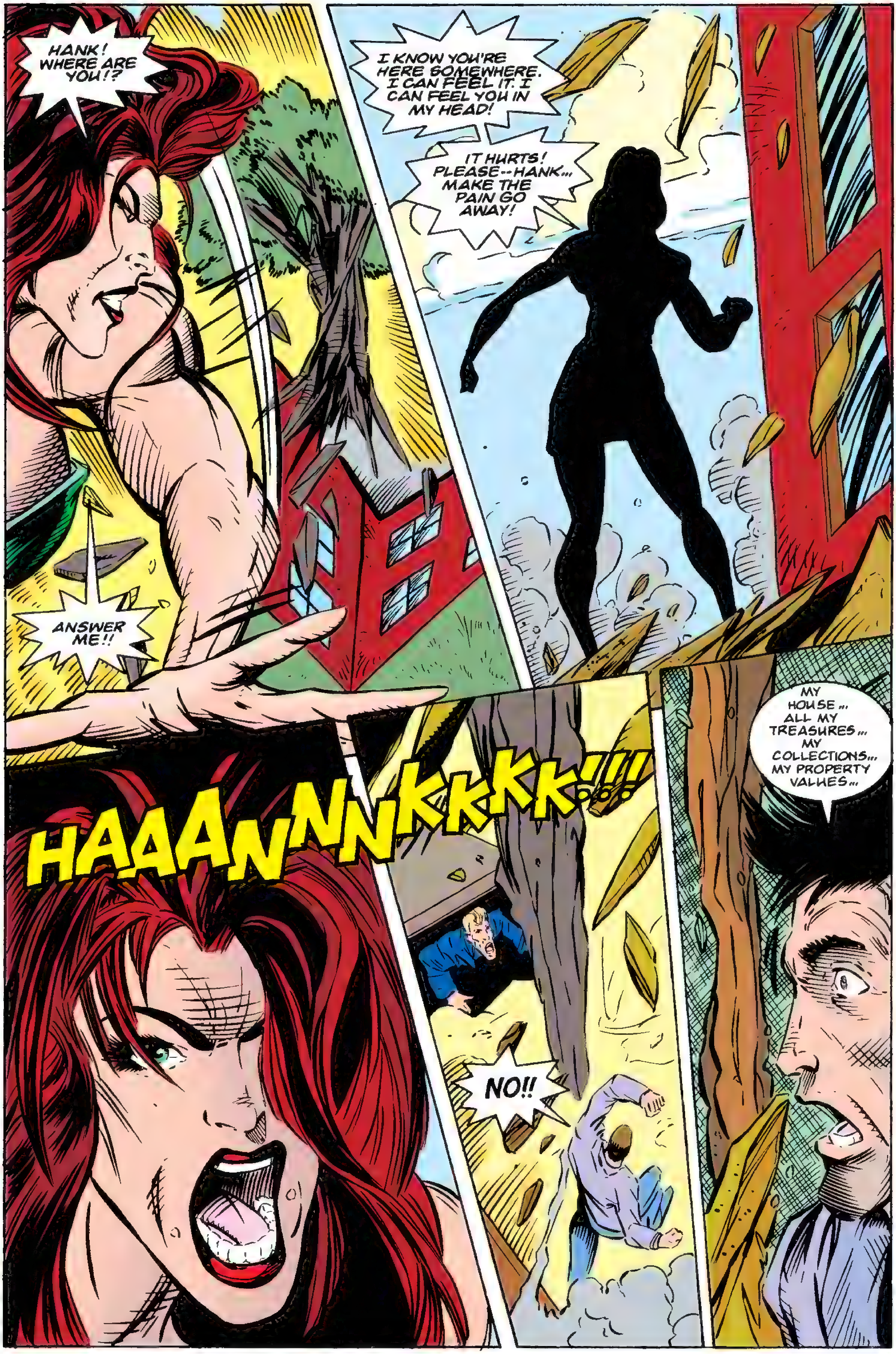

THERE'S AN OLD APHORISM: "THE BIGGER THEY ARE, THE HARDER THEY FALL."
WELL, FOR ONE PARTICULAR GIANT-MAN, AKA DR. HENRY PYM, THAT FALL HAS BEEN MIGHTY HARD INDEED.
HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW LONG HE'S BEEN THERE, BUT IT'S BEEN LONG ENOUGH FOR HIS EYES, NOW ACCUSTOMED TO THE DARKNESS, TO RESENT THE INTRUSION OF THAT SINGLE SLIVER OF LIGHT FROM ABOVE.
LONG ENOUGH FOR HIS EARS, TUNED IN ONLY TO HIS GASPING BREATHS, HIS POUNDING HEARTBEATS, TO FIND OFFENSE WITH THE TRESPASSING STATIC OF THAT ACCURSED RADIO SPEAKER.
AND LONG ENOUGH FOR HIS MIND, DESPERATE TO FIND SOLACE IN THE ILLUSORY LANDSCAPE OF DREAMS, TO BE TOTALLY ENRAGED AT BEING JOLTED BACK INTO THE NIGHTMARE THAT IS HENRY PYM'S REALITY.
GOOD MORNING, DR. PYM. I TRUST YOU'RE READY FOR US TO CONTINUE OUR TALK?
...TALK?... WHERE AM... HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE?
WHERE'S JAN?
CUT THE SLEEPWALKER ACT, AVENGER. THIS IS COL. MANNING SPEAKING.
DR. HONDA'S TREATED YOU WITH KID GLOVES SO FAR, DR. PYM. WELL THIS TIME THE GLOVES ARE COMING OFF!
THIS TIME YOU'RE GOING TO TELL US EVERYTHING!
CAREFUL, COLONEL. FROM PYM'S MENTAL HISTORY, I SUSPECT THAT THIS CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH MAY PROVE EXTREMELY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.
LISTEN, DOCTOR. WE'VE TRIED IT YOUR WAY. AS LONG AS HE CAN'T GROW HE'S NO THREAT.
LET ME OUT OF HERE! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO MY LAB! TO THE GARDEN! DON'T YOU IDIOTS UNDERSTAND? I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS!
BELIEVE ME, DR. PYM... I'M WELL AWARE OF THAT.
WHY ELSE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE IN THERE?

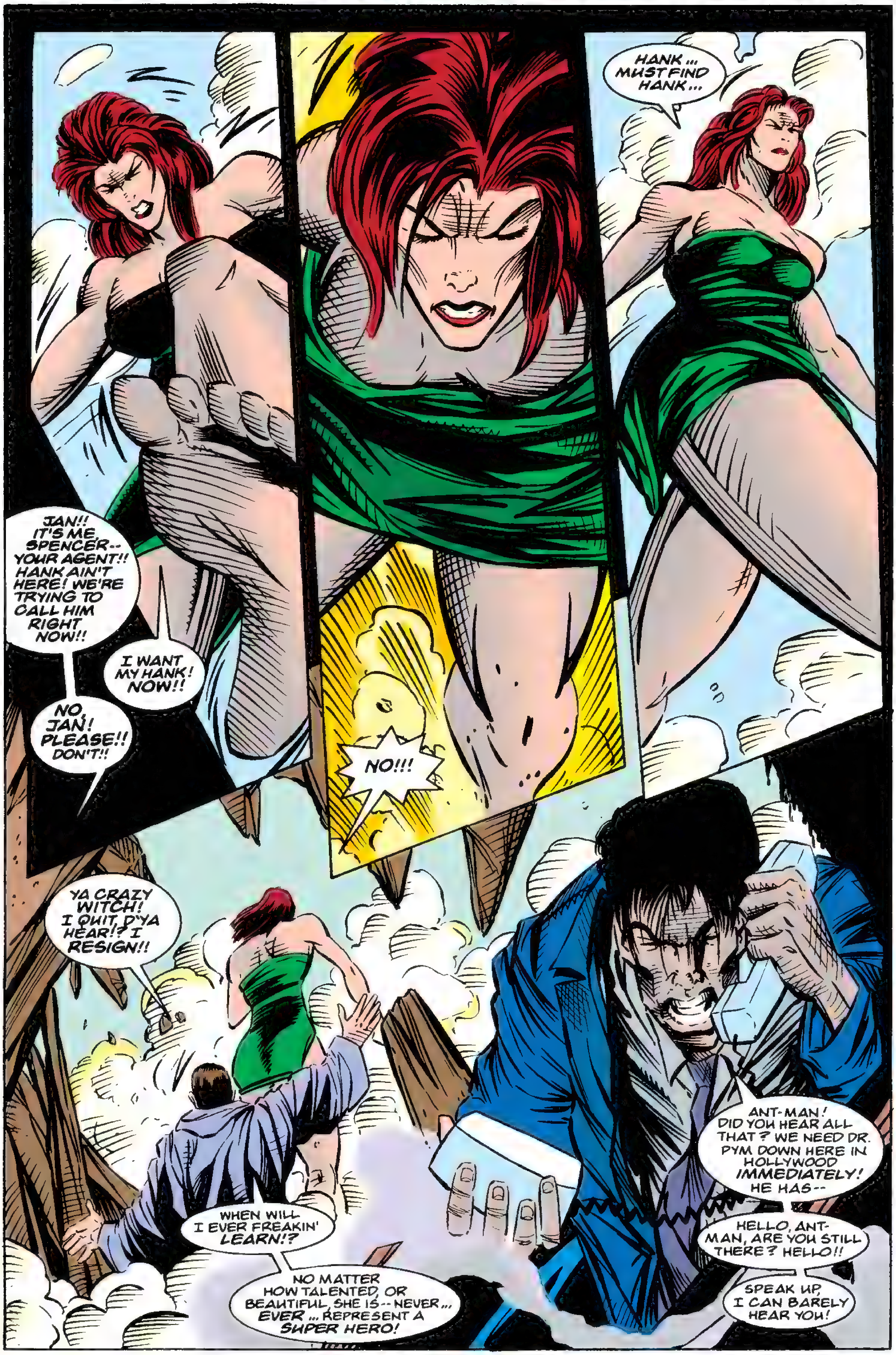

FOOLING AROUND WITH GIANT BUGS MAY BE YOUR IDEA OF A GOOD TIME, BUT BACK WHERE I COME FROM, BACK IN THE **REAL** WORLD, THEY'RE DOWNRIGHT DANGEROUS NUISANCES THAT HAVE TO BE DESTROYED BEFORE THEY DESTROY US.
YOU WANT TO GET BACK TO YOUR LAB? FINE. JUST TELL US WHERE IT IS AND WE'LL SEE THAT YOU GET A MILITARY ESCORT--
NO!! I CAN'T RISK ANY FURTHER ***CONTAMINATION!***
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU-- EVERYTHING THAT HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO THE B.I.G. PROJECT HAS BEEN MUTATED BY AN AS YET UN-ISOLATED VARIANT OF THE PYM PARTICLE--
EXCEPT FOR ***YOU***, DR. PYM.
HOW VERY CONVENIENT THAT YOU SEEM TO BE ***IMMUNE*** TO THIS SO-CALLED VARIANT. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?
I-I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE IT ISN'T THAT STINKIN' GARDEN AT ALL, PYM. MAYBE THE SOURCE OF ALL THESE MUTATIONS-- IS ***YOU.***
...MAYBE...
INTERESTING HYPOTHESIS, COLONEL.
BUT ACCORDING TO MY COMPARISON TESTS, PYM'S GENETIC STRUCTURE IS VIRTUALLY ***UNCHANGED*** FROM THOSE RECORDED IN THE AVENGERS' MEDICAL LOGS.
YEAH, DR. HONDA, BUT HOW DO WE KNOW HE WASN'T ACTUALLY LEAKING OUT THOSE PYM PARTICLES EVEN THEN? THEY MIGHT JUST HAVE HAD A RELATIVELY LONG INCUBATION PERIOD.
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD-- THE GUY COULD VERY WELL BE A FREAKIN' GIANT-MONSTER ***TYPHOID MARY!***

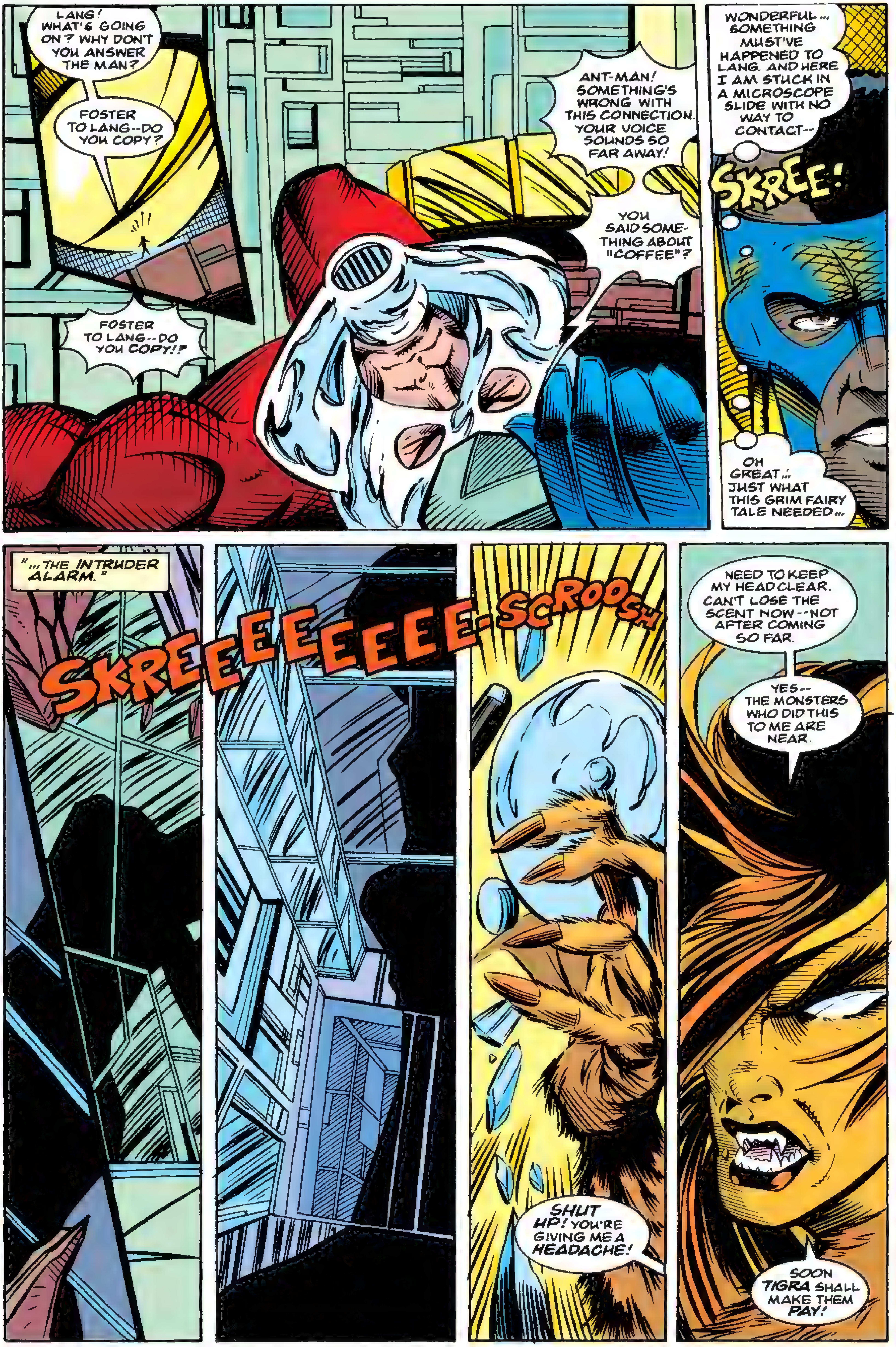

SORRY, DR. PYM. IF YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT YOUR BEING THE CAUSE-- WELL, WE CAN'T VERY WELL LET YOU OUT OF THERE NOW, CAN WE?
NO!! I ADMITTED NOTHING! I CAN'T BE THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS! I CAN'T!!
THAT WOULD MAKE MY WHOLE LIFE A FAILURE! I WON'T ADMIT TO THAT! I WON'T! DO YOU HEAR ME!? I WON'T!!
UNNNGGHH--
DR. PYM? WHAT'S WR--
OH, LORD... IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN... PULSES IN THE PARTICLE STREAM...
...NO... IT CAN'T BE TRUE...
...PLEASE, GOD... DON'T LET IT BE TRUE...
MEANWHILE, IN THE B.I.G. COMPOUND SOMEWHERE BENEATH DEATH VALLEY, NEVADA...
'BOUT TIME YOU GOT BACK. I WAS GOING BATTY. WELL? ANY WORD FROM HANK?
NO. ALL I COULD GET WAS THE BUREAUCRATIC RUN-AROUND. THEY SAY HE JUST VANISHED AFTER THE BIG INSECTS WERE KILLED IN THE DESERT.
IMAGINE THAT. A GIANT-MAN DISAPPEARING CLEAR OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH. THEY MUST HAVE HAD DAVID COPPERFIELD WORKING FOR THEM.
GUESS YOUR FANTASTIC FOUR CLEARANCE ONLY GOT YOU SO FAR, HUH?
DON'T GET SNOOTY, FOSTER.
SORRY, I COULDN'T RESIST.
BRRRRPP!
YOW!! WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?
JUST THE PHONE. TELL ME, IS HANK REALLY THAT RESENTFUL ABOUT MY REPLACING REED RICHARDS IN THE FF?
HEY, YOU'VE GOTTA UNDERSTAND--HANK IDOLIZED RICHARDS. HE ENVIED HIM.
DO YOU THINK HANK LIKED THE IDEA THAT WHEN IT CAME TIME TO FILL RICHARDS' SHOES THE FF CHOSE HANK'S OWN REPLACEMENT?
BRRRRPP!
BLAST IT, LANG! WILL YOU PICK UP THE FREAKIN' PHONE!! IT'S WORSE THAN A SONIC BOOM WHEN YOU'RE THIS SIZE!

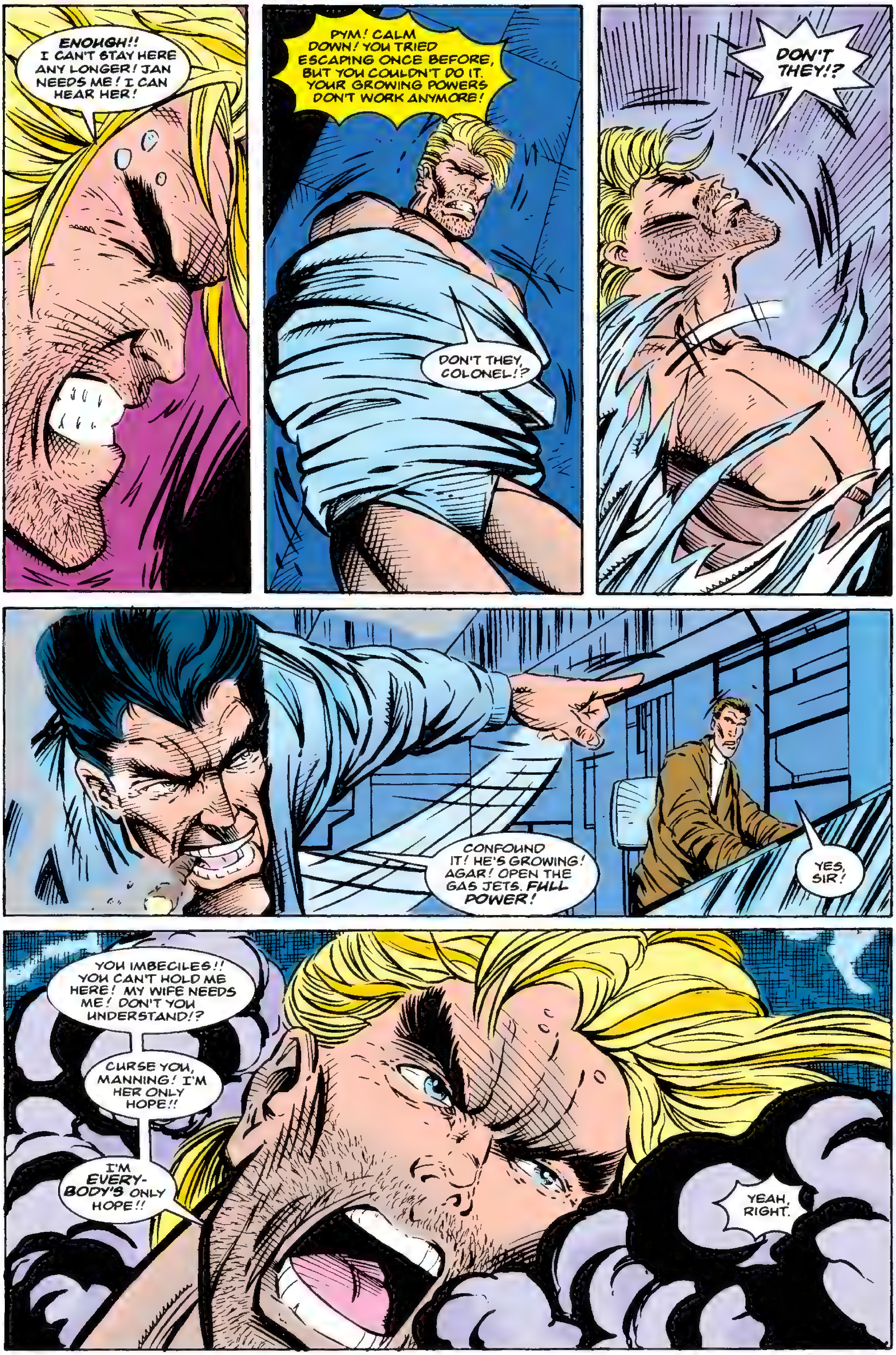

YEAH, RIGHT. I GUESS WITHOUT A CYBERNETIC HELMET THOSE SOUNDS CAN BE PRETTY-- WOOH--
LANG?
I'M OKAY. JUST GOT A LITTLE WOOZY FOR A SECOND. HAVEN'T HAD ANYTHING TO EAT SINCE YESTERDAY.
BRRRPP!
NOW WHERE THE HECK IS THAT PHONE?
IT'S ON THE CONSOLE. YOU WERE JUST ON IT NOT FIVE MINUTES AGO.
BRRRPP!
SCOTT, ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?
YES, I'M FINE. NOTHING A LITTLE EXCEDRIN AND PEPTO WOULDN'T CURE.
THANKS LITTLE FRIENDS, I APPRECIATE YOUR HELP. NOW BACK TO THE COLONY WITH ALL OF YOU.
THIS IS NO SAFE PLACE FOR ANTS.
HELLO. ANT-MAN SPEAKING.
DR. PYM! THANK HEAVENS I'VE FINALLY REACHED YOU! THIS IS DR. ROSSIN, JAN'S THERAPIST AND I--
WHOA, DOCTOR. THIS ISN'T HENRY PYM--
--BUT YOU SAID... NEVER MIND-- WHERE'S DR. PYM? IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
IT'S ABOUT HIS EX-WIFE, JANET VAN DYNE. SOMETHING TERRIBLE'S HAPPENED TO HER!
SHE... SHE'S... GROWN!
...OH NO...
IS THAT ALL YOU CAN SAY?! WHERE'S HENRY PYM?! I DEMAND T--
DR. ROSSIN! SHE'S AWAKE!! JAN'S AWAKE!!

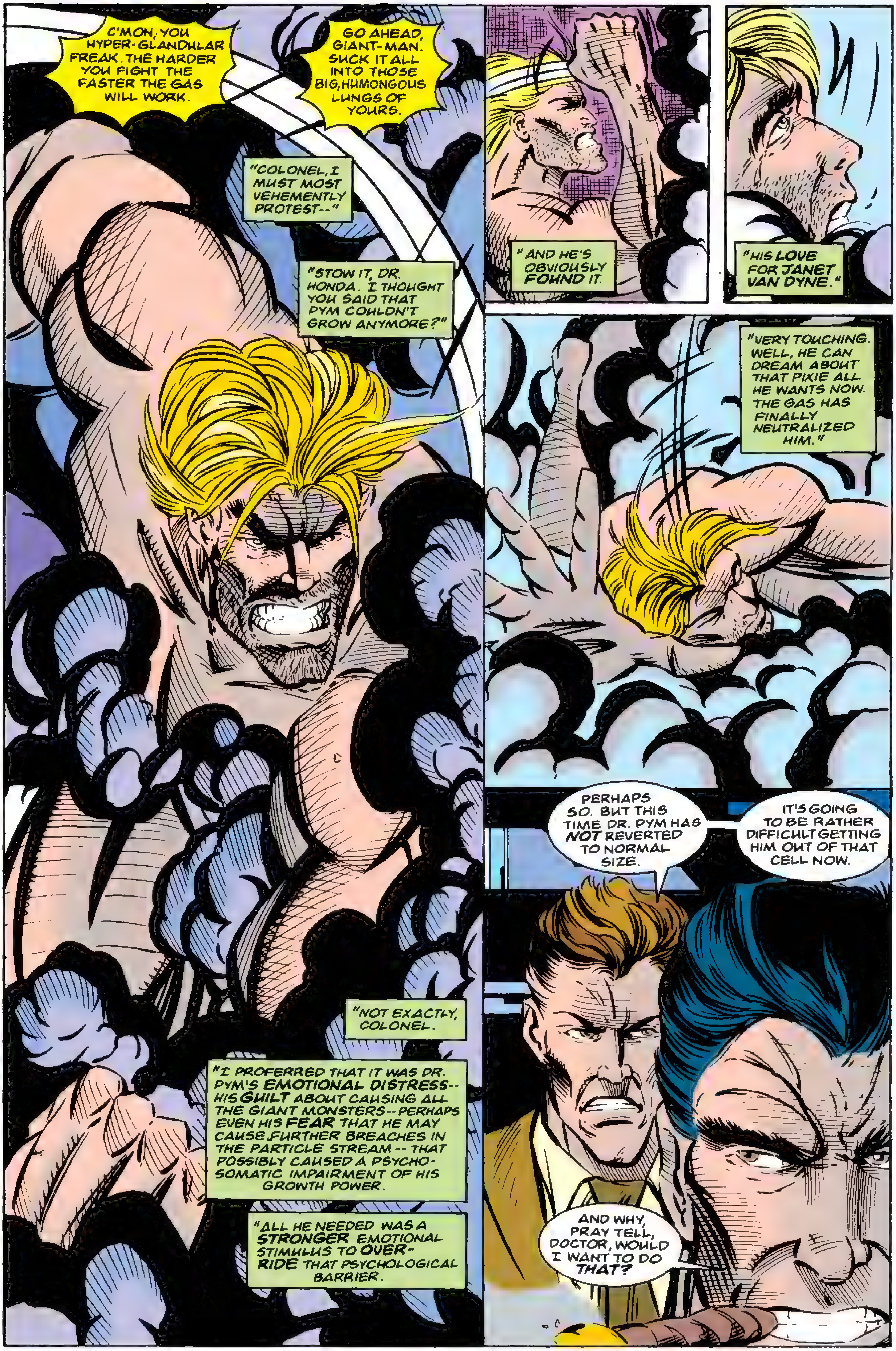
"AND, BOY, IS SHE EVER MAD!!"
ATTACK OF THE 50 FT JAN
HANK!!
GEORGE PÉREZ -- WRITER
JEFFREY MOORE -- PENCILER
TIMOTHY DZON -- INKER
ELLIE deVILLE -- LETTERER
MARIANNE LIGHTLE -- COLORIST
RICHARD ASHFORD -- EDITOR
RALPH MACCHIO -- GROUP EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO -- EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

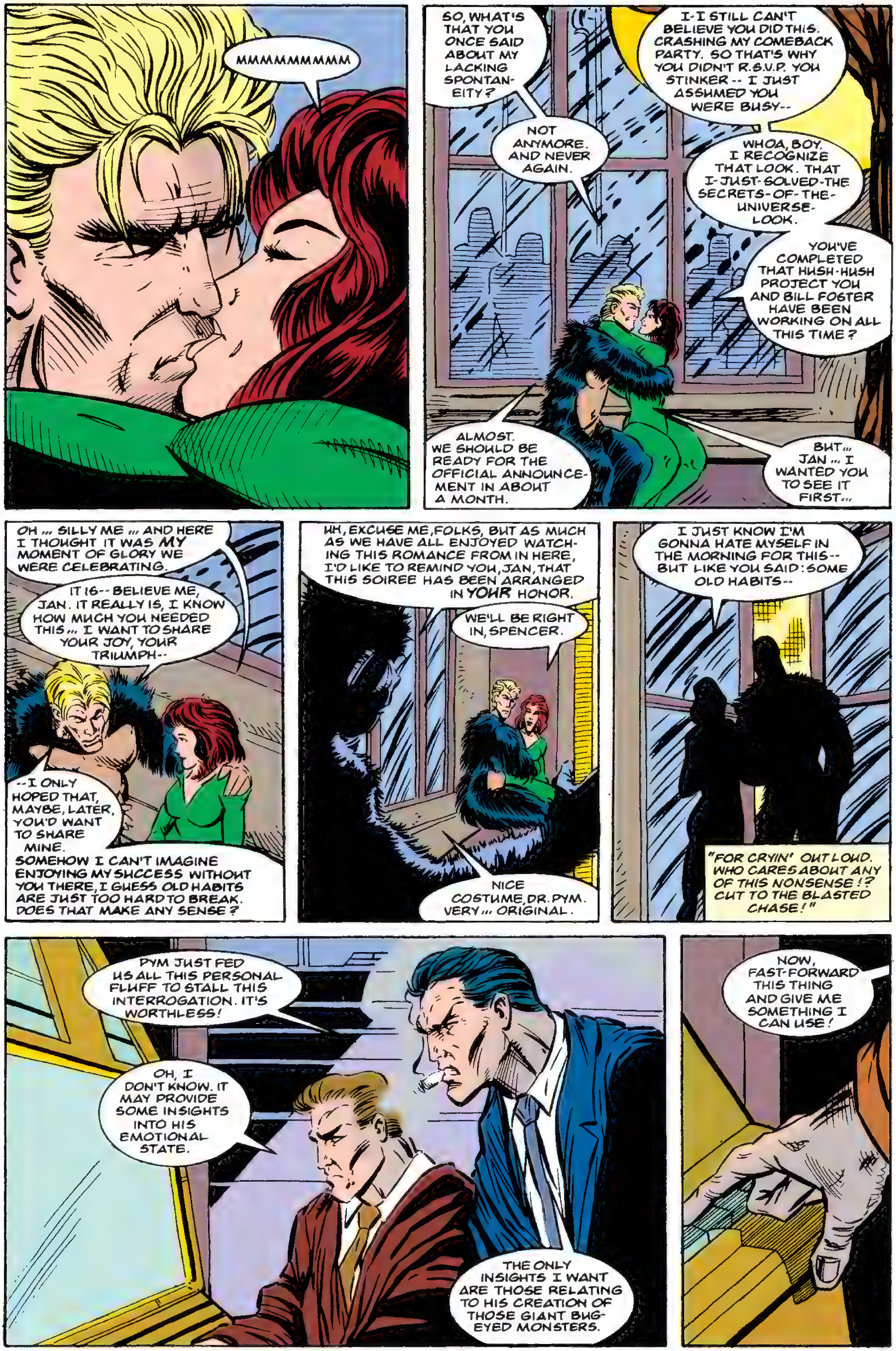

HANK! WHERE ARE YOU!?
ANSWER ME!!
I KNOW YOU'RE HERE SOMEWHERE. I CAN FEEL IT. I CAN FEEL YOU IN MY HEAD!
IT HURTS! PLEASE--HANK... MAKE THE PAIN GO AWAY!
HAAANNNKKKK!!!
NO!!
MY HOUSE... ALL MY TREASURES... MY COLLECTIONS... MY PROPERTY VALUES...

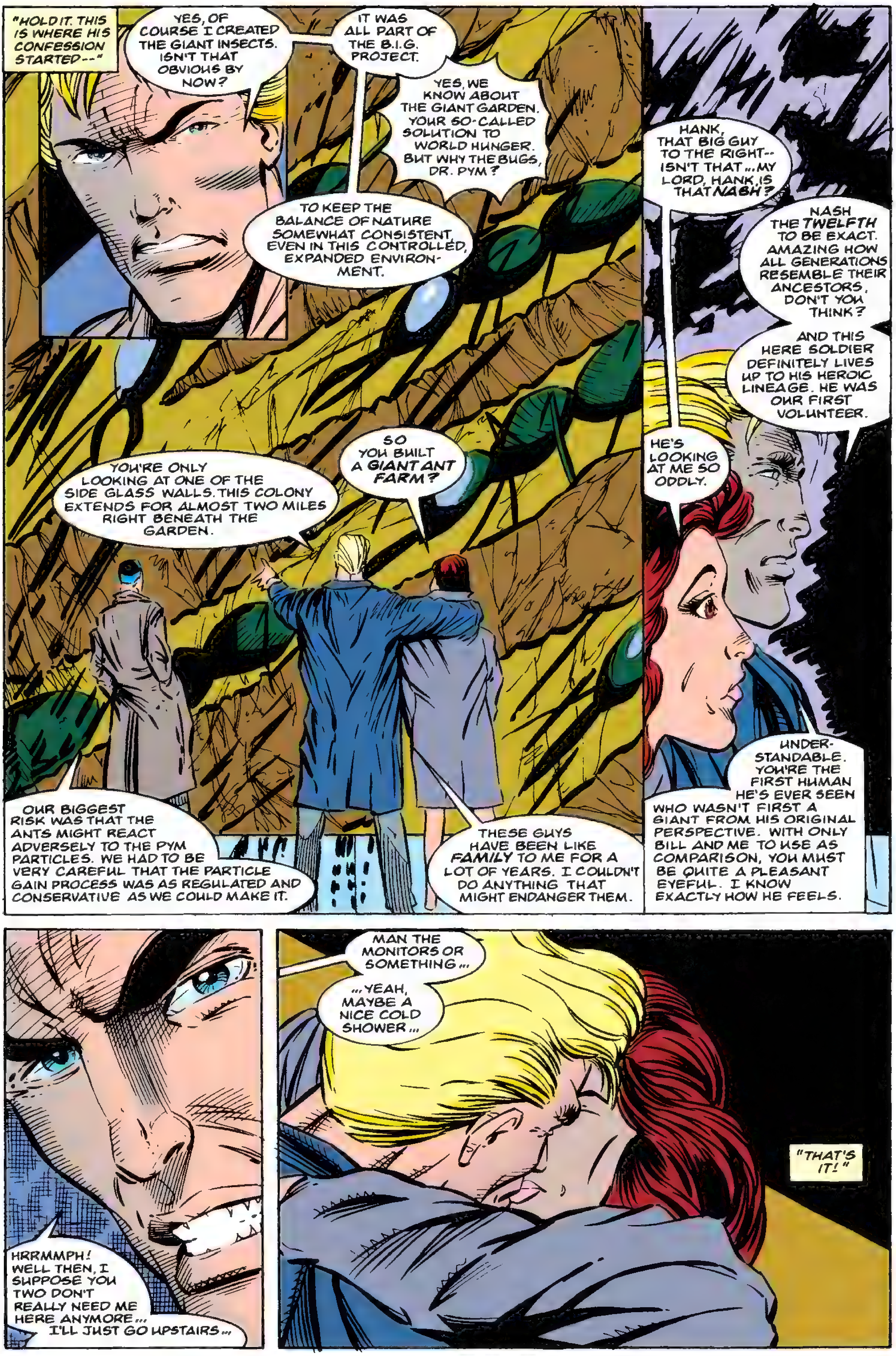

HANK... MUST FIND HANK...
JAN!! IT'S ME, SPENCER-- YOUR AGENT!! HANK AIN'T HERE! WE'RE TRYING TO CALL HIM RIGHT NOW!!
I WANT MY HANK! NOW!!
NO, JAN! PLEASE!! DON'T!!
NO!!!
YA CRAZY WITCH! I QUIT, D'YA HEAR!? I RESIGN!!
ANT-MAN! DID YOU HEAR ALL THAT? WE NEED DR. PYM DOWN HERE IN HOLLYWOOD IMMEDIATELY! HE HAS--
WHEN WILL I EVER FREAKIN' LEARN!?
NO MATTER HOW TALENTED, OR BEAUTIFUL, SHE IS-- NEVER... EVER... REPRESENT A SUPER HERO!
HELLO, ANT-MAN, ARE YOU STILL THERE? HELLO!!
SPEAK UP, I CAN BARELY HEAR YOU!

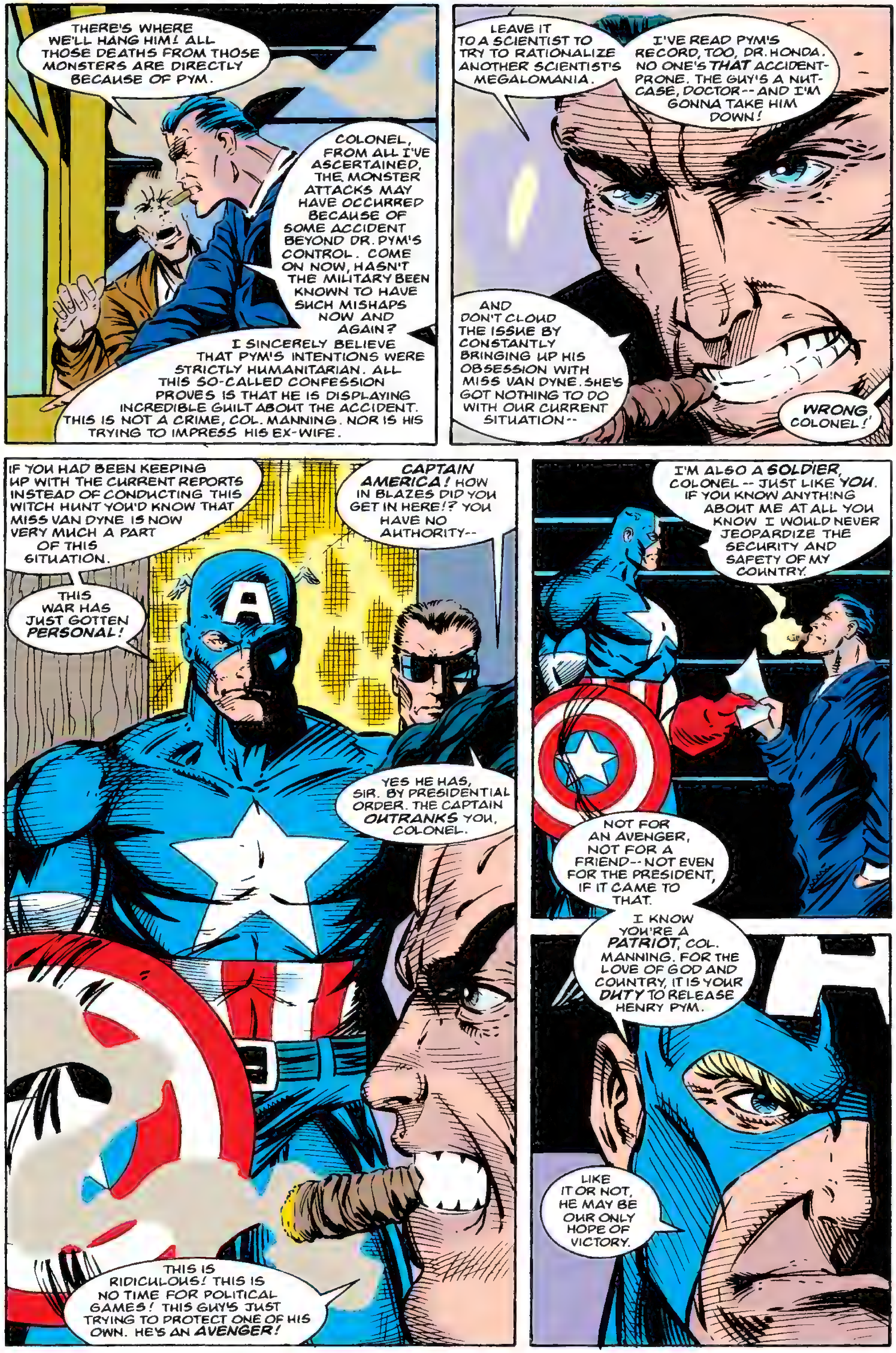

LANG! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER THE MAN?
FOSTER TO LANG--DO YOU COPY?
FOSTER TO LANG--DO YOU COPY!?
ANT-MAN! SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THIS CONNECTION. YOUR VOICE SOUNDS SO FAR AWAY!
YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT "COFFEE"?
WONDERFUL... SOMETHING MUST'VE HAPPENED TO LANG. AND HERE I AM STUCK IN A MICROSCOPE SLIDE WITH NO WAY TO CONTACT--
SKREE!
OH GREAT... JUST WHAT THIS GRIM FAIRY TALE NEEDED...
"...THE INTRUDER ALARM."
SKREEEEEEEEEE-SCROOSH
SHUT UP! YOU'RE GIVING ME A HEADACHE!
NEED TO KEEP MY HEAD CLEAR. CAN'T LOSE THE SCENT NOW--NOT AFTER COMING SO FAR.
YES--THE MONSTERS WHO DID THIS TO ME ARE NEAR.
SOON TIGRA SHALL MAKE THEM PAY!

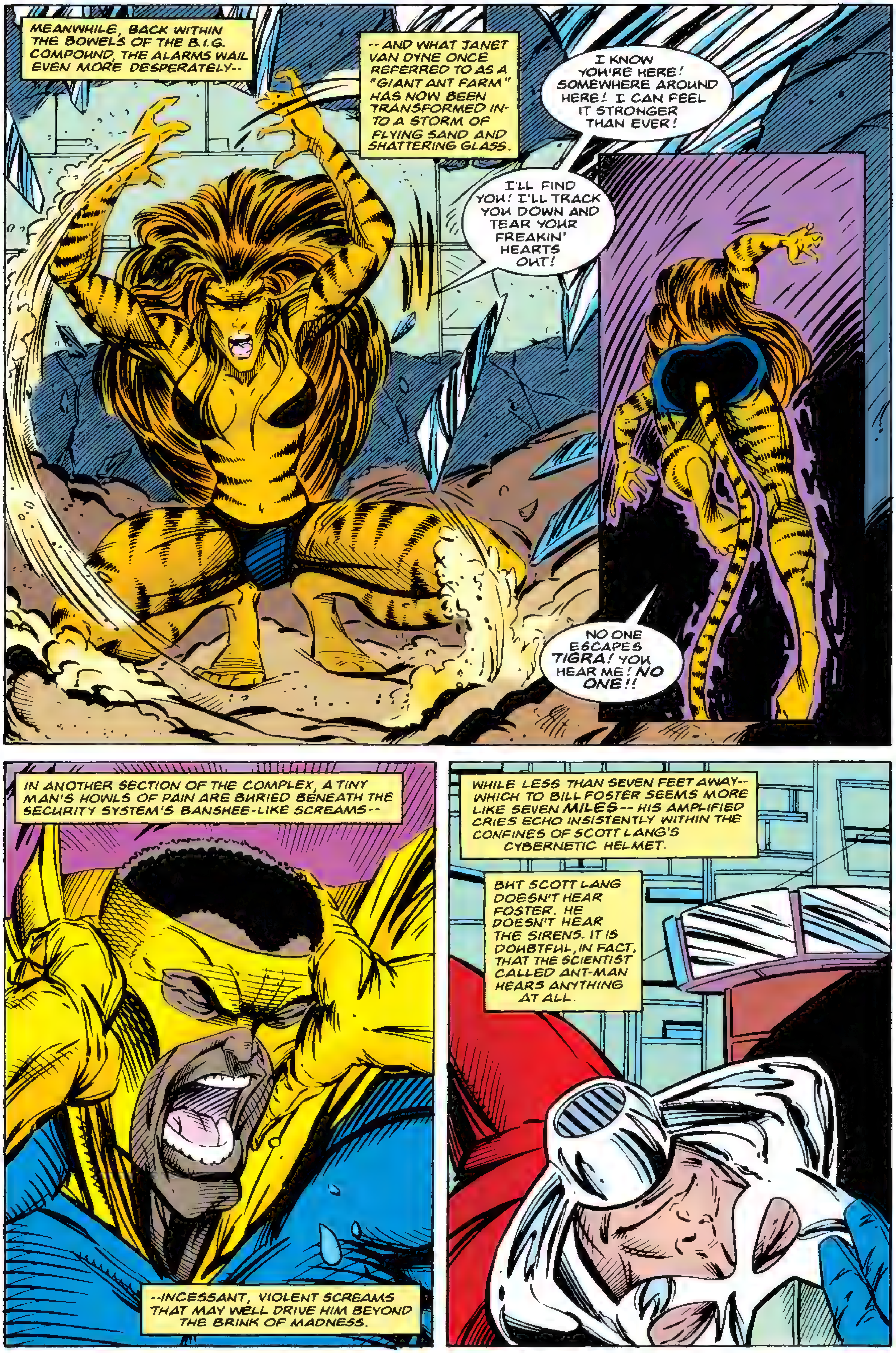

ENOUGH!! I CAN'T STAY HERE ANY LONGER! JAN NEEDS ME! I CAN HEAR HER!
PYM! CALM DOWN! YOU TRIED ESCAPING ONCE BEFORE, BUT YOU COULDN'T DO IT. YOUR GROWING POWERS DON'T WORK ANYMORE!
DON'T THEY, COLONEL!?
DON'T THEY!?
CONFOUND IT! HE'S GROWING! AGAR! OPEN THE GAS JETS. FULL POWER!
YES, SIR!
YOU IMBECILES!! YOU CAN'T HOLD ME HERE! MY WIFE NEEDS ME! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND!?
CURSE YOU, MANNING! I'M HER ONLY HOPE!!
I'M EVERY-BODY'S ONLY HOPE!!
YEAH, RIGHT.

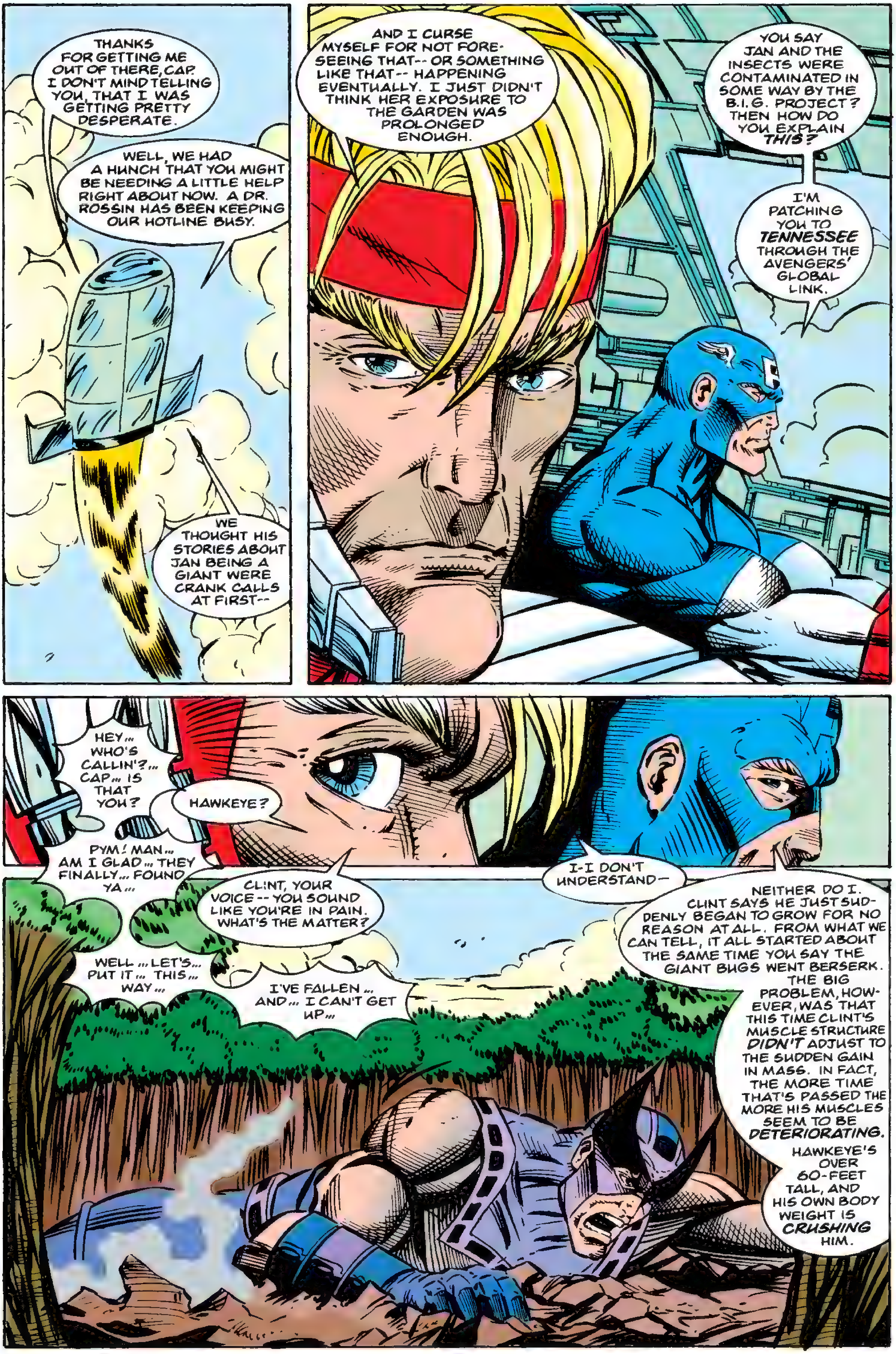

C'MON, YOU HYPER-GLANDULAR FREAK. THE HARDER YOU FIGHT THE FASTER THE GAS WILL WORK.
GO AHEAD, GIANT-MAN. SUCK IT ALL INTO THOSE BIG, HUMONGOUS LUNGS OF YOURS.
"COLONEL, I MUST MOST VEHEMENTLY PROTEST--"
"STOW IT, DR. HONDA. I THOUGHT YOU SAID THAT PYM COULDN'T GROW ANYMORE?"
"NOT EXACTLY, COLONEL.
"I PROFERRED THAT IT WAS DR. PYM'S **EMOTIONAL DISTRESS**--HIS **GUILT** ABOUT CAUSING ALL THE GIANT MONSTERS--PERHAPS EVEN HIS **FEAR** THAT HE MAY CAUSE FURTHER BREACHES IN THE PARTICLE STREAM -- THAT POSSIBLY CAUSED A PSYCHOSOMATIC IMPAIRMENT OF HIS GROWTH POWER.
"ALL HE NEEDED WAS A **STRONGER** EMOTIONAL STIMULUS TO **OVERRIDE** THAT PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER.
"AND HE'S OBVIOUSLY **FOUND** IT.
"HIS **LOVE** FOR **JANET VAN DYNE**."
"VERY TOUCHING. WELL, HE CAN DREAM ABOUT THAT PIXIE ALL HE WANTS NOW. THE GAS HAS FINALLY NEUTRALIZED HIM."
PERHAPS SO. BUT THIS TIME DR. PYM HAS **NOT** REVERTED TO NORMAL SIZE.
IT'S GOING TO BE RATHER DIFFICULT GETTING HIM OUT OF THAT CELL NOW.
AND WHY, PRAY TELL, DOCTOR, WOULD I WANT TO DO **THAT?**

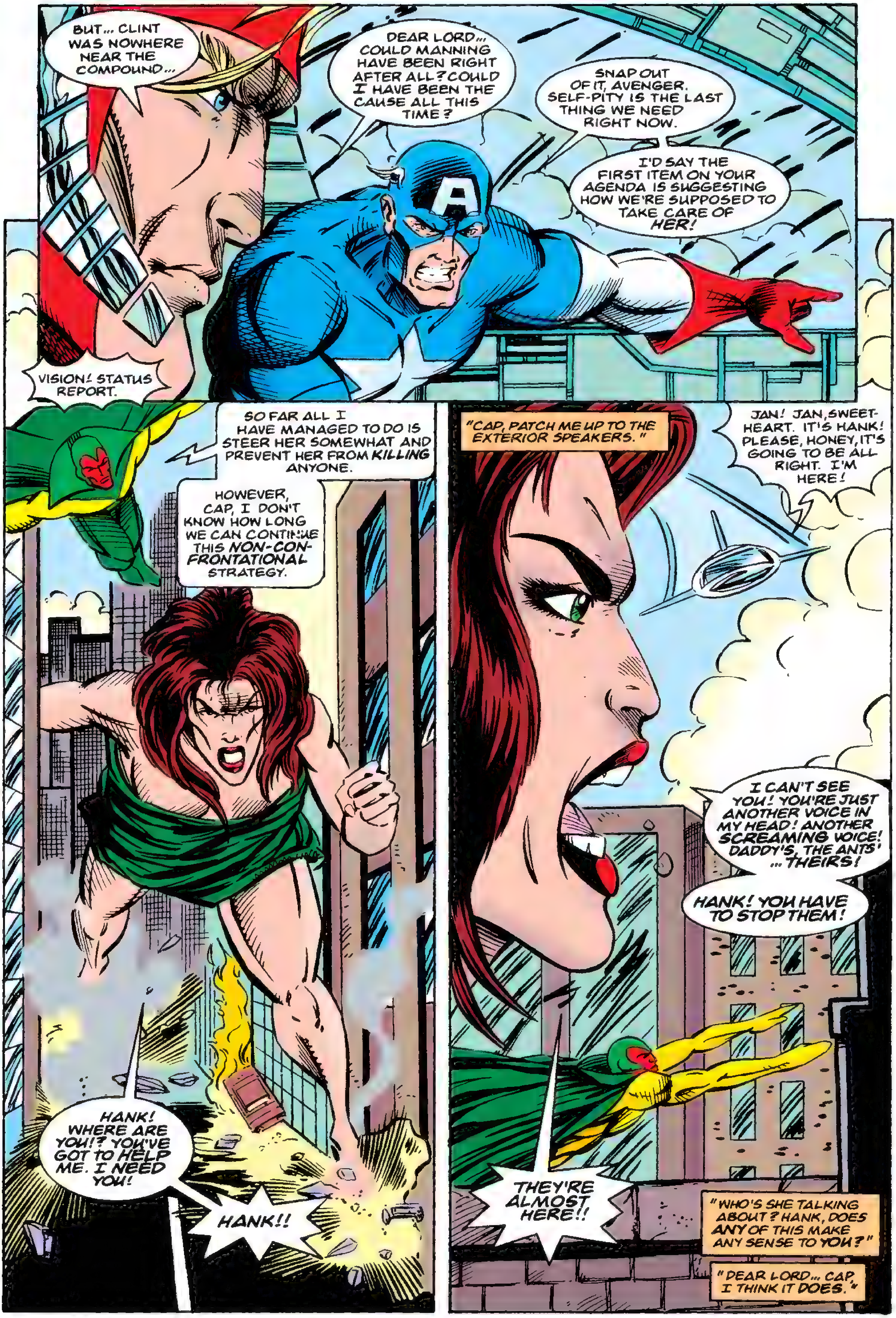

MMMMMMMMM
SO, WHAT'S THAT YOU ONCE SAID ABOUT MY LACKING SPONTANEITY?
NOT ANYMORE. AND NEVER AGAIN.
I-I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID THIS. CRASHING MY COMEBACK PARTY. SO THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T R.S.V.P. YOU STINKER -- I JUST ASSUMED YOU WERE BUSY--
WHOA, BOY. I RECOGNIZE THAT LOOK. THAT I-JUST-SOLVED-THE-SECRETS-OF-THE-UNIVERSE-LOOK.
YOU'VE COMPLETED THAT HUSH-HUSH PROJECT YOU AND BILL FOSTER HAVE BEEN WORKING ON ALL THIS TIME?
ALMOST. WE SHOULD BE READY FOR THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT IN ABOUT A MONTH.
BUT... JAN ... I WANTED YOU TO SEE IT FIRST...
OH ... SILLY ME ... AND HERE I THOUGHT IT WAS MY MOMENT OF GLORY WE WERE CELEBRATING.
IT IS-- BELIEVE ME, JAN. IT REALLY IS, I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU NEEDED THIS... I WANT TO SHARE YOUR JOY, YOUR TRIUMPH--
--I ONLY HOPED THAT, MAYBE, LATER, YOU'D WANT TO SHARE MINE. SOMEHOW I CAN'T IMAGINE ENJOYING MY SUCCESS WITHOUT YOU THERE, I GUESS OLD HABITS ARE JUST TOO HARD TO BREAK. DOES THAT MAKE ANY SENSE?
UH, EXCUSE ME, FOLKS, BUT AS MUCH AS WE HAVE ALL ENJOYED WATCHING THIS ROMANCE FROM IN HERE, I'D LIKE TO REMIND YOU, JAN, THAT THIS SOIREE HAS BEEN ARRANGED IN YOUR HONOR.
WE'LL BE RIGHT IN, SPENCER.
NICE COSTUME, DR. PYM. VERY... ORIGINAL.
I JUST KNOW I'M GONNA HATE MYSELF IN THE MORNING FOR THIS-- BUT LIKE YOU SAID: SOME OLD HABITS--
"FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD. WHO CARES ABOUT ANY OF THIS NONSENSE!? CUT TO THE BLASTED CHASE!"
PYM JUST FED US ALL THIS PERSONAL FLUFF TO STALL THIS INTERROGATION. IT'S WORTHLESS!
OH, I DON'T KNOW. IT MAY PROVIDE SOME INSIGHTS INTO HIS EMOTIONAL STATE.
THE ONLY INSIGHTS I WANT ARE THOSE RELATING TO HIS CREATION OF THOSE GIANT BUG-EYED MONSTERS.
NOW, FAST-FORWARD THIS THING AND GIVE ME SOMETHING I CAN USE!

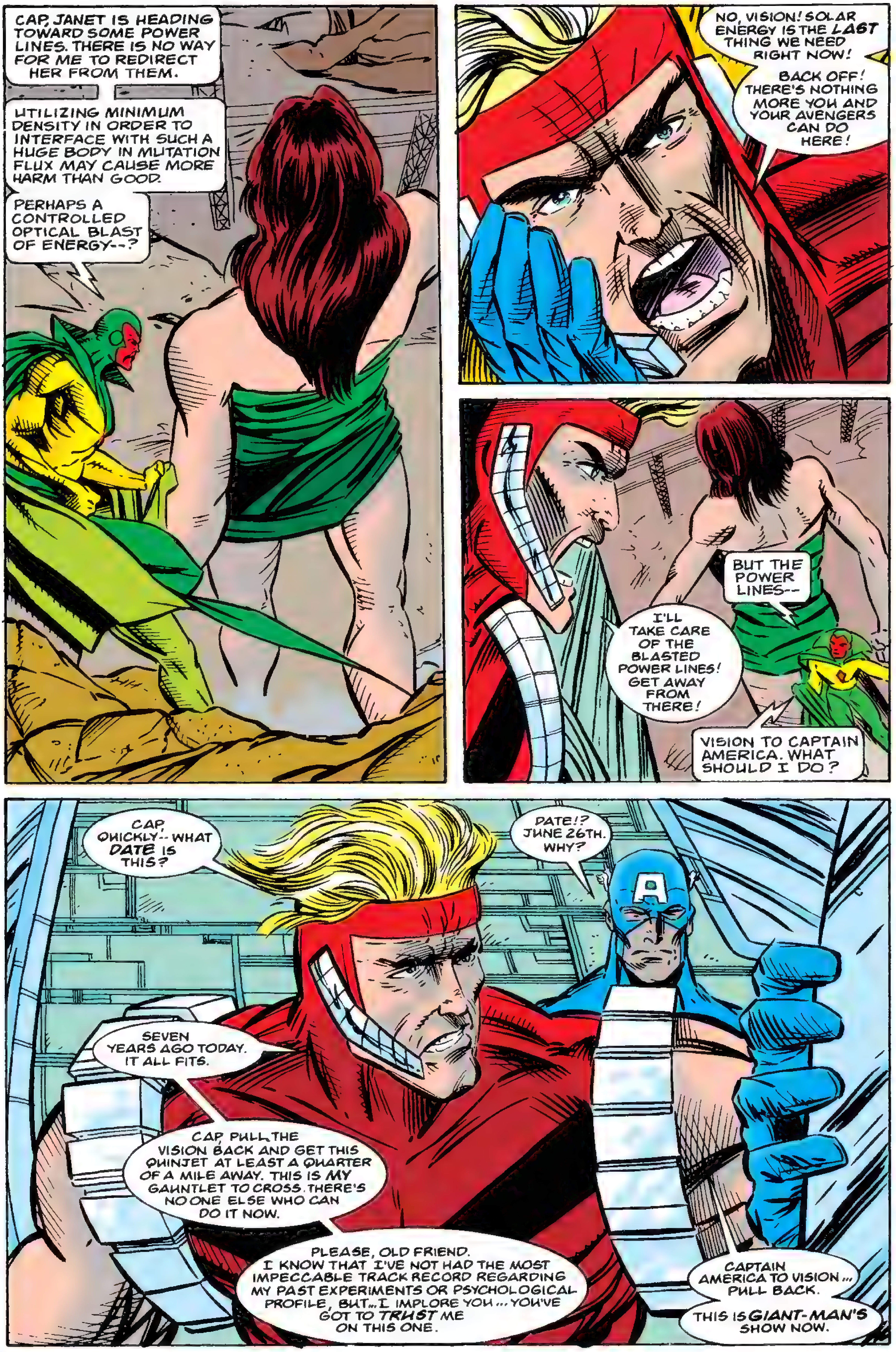

"HOLD IT. THIS IS WHERE HIS CONFESSION STARTED--"
YES, OF COURSE I CREATED THE GIANT INSECTS. ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS BY NOW?
IT WAS ALL PART OF THE B.I.G. PROJECT.
YES, WE KNOW ABOUT THE GIANT GARDEN. YOUR SO-CALLED SOLUTION TO WORLD HUNGER. BUT WHY THE BUGS, DR. PYM?
TO KEEP THE BALANCE OF NATURE SOMEWHAT CONSISTENT, EVEN IN THIS CONTROLLED, EXPANDED ENVIRONMENT.
YOU'RE ONLY LOOKING AT ONE OF THE SIDE GLASS WALLS. THIS COLONY EXTENDS FOR ALMOST TWO MILES RIGHT BENEATH THE GARDEN.
SO YOU BUILT A *GIANT ANT FARM?*
OUR BIGGEST RISK WAS THAT THE ANTS MIGHT REACT ADVERSELY TO THE PYM PARTICLES. WE HAD TO BE VERY CAREFUL THAT THE PARTICLE GAIN PROCESS WAS AS REGULATED AND CONSERVATIVE AS WE COULD MAKE IT.
THESE GUYS HAVE BEEN LIKE *FAMILY* TO ME FOR A LOT OF YEARS. I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT ENDANGER THEM.
HANK, THAT BIG GUY TO THE RIGHT-- ISN'T THAT... MY LORD, HANK, IS THAT *NASH?*
NASH THE *TWELFTH* TO BE EXACT. AMAZING HOW ALL GENERATIONS RESEMBLE THEIR ANCESTORS, DON'T YOU THINK?
AND THIS HERE SOLDIER DEFINITELY LIVES UP TO HIS HEROIC LINEAGE. HE WAS OUR FIRST VOLUNTEER.
HE'S LOOKING AT ME SO ODDLY.
UNDERSTANDABLE. YOU'RE THE FIRST HUMAN HE'S EVER SEEN WHO WASN'T FIRST A GIANT FROM HIS ORIGINAL PERSPECTIVE. WITH ONLY BILL AND ME TO USE AS COMPARISON, YOU MUST BE QUITE A PLEASANT EYEFUL. I KNOW EXACTLY HOW HE FEELS.
HRRMMPH! WELL THEN, I SUPPOSE YOU TWO DON'T REALLY NEED ME HERE ANYMORE... I'LL JUST GO UPSTAIRS...
MAN THE MONITORS OR SOMETHING...
...YEAH, MAYBE A NICE COLD SHOWER...
"THAT'S IT!"

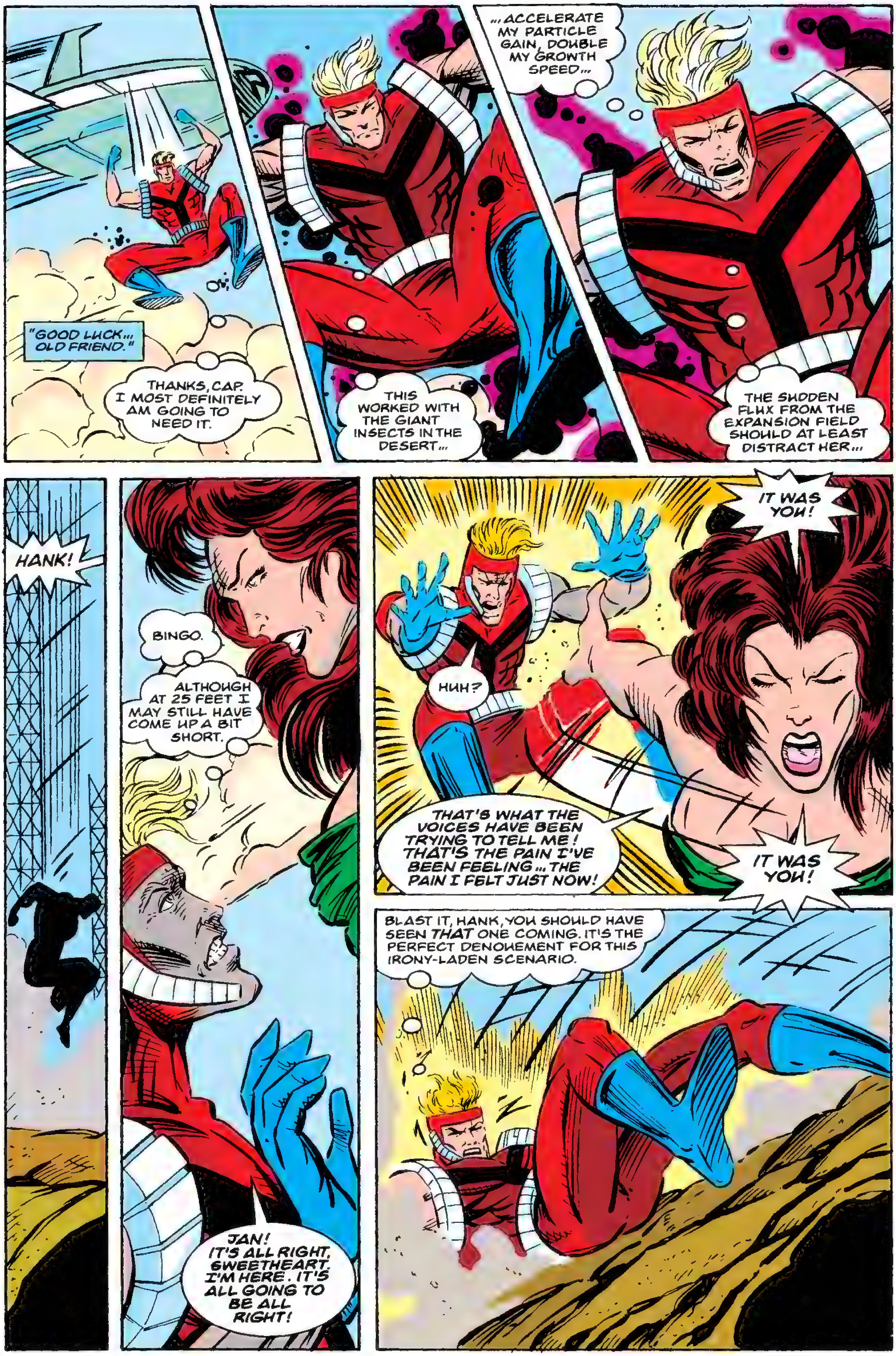

THERE'S WHERE WE'LL HANG HIM! ALL THOSE DEATHS FROM THOSE MONSTERS ARE DIRECTLY BECAUSE OF PYM.
COLONEL, FROM ALL I'VE ASCERTAINED, THE MONSTER ATTACKS MAY HAVE OCCURRED BECAUSE OF SOME ACCIDENT BEYOND DR. PYM'S CONTROL. COME ON NOW, HASN'T THE MILITARY BEEN KNOWN TO HAVE SUCH MISHAPS NOW AND AGAIN?
I SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT PYM'S INTENTIONS WERE STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN. ALL THIS SO-CALLED CONFESSION PROVES IS THAT HE IS DISPLAYING INCREDIBLE GUILT ABOUT THE ACCIDENT. THIS IS NOT A CRIME, COL. MANNING. NOR IS HIS TRYING TO IMPRESS HIS EX-WIFE.
LEAVE IT TO A SCIENTIST TO TRY TO RATIONALIZE ANOTHER SCIENTIST'S MEGALOMANIA.
I'VE READ PYM'S RECORD, TOO, DR. HONDA. NO ONE'S *THAT* ACCIDENT-PRONE. THE GUY'S A NUT-CASE, DOCTOR -- AND I'M GONNA TAKE HIM DOWN!
AND DON'T CLOUD THE ISSUE BY CONSTANTLY BRINGING UP HIS OBSESSION WITH MISS VAN DYNE. SHE'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR CURRENT SITUATION --
WRONG COLONEL!
IF YOU HAD BEEN KEEPING UP WITH THE CURRENT REPORTS INSTEAD OF CONDUCTING THIS WITCH HUNT YOU'D KNOW THAT MISS VAN DYNE IS NOW VERY MUCH A PART OF THIS SITUATION.
THIS WAR HAS JUST GOTTEN *PERSONAL!*
CAPTAIN AMERICA! HOW IN BLAZES DID YOU GET IN HERE!? YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY--
YES HE HAS, SIR. BY PRESIDENTIAL ORDER. THE CAPTAIN *OUTRANKS* YOU, COLONEL.
THIS IS RIDICULOUS! THIS IS NO TIME FOR POLITICAL GAMES! THIS GUY'S JUST TRYING TO PROTECT ONE OF HIS OWN. HE'S AN *AVENGER!*
I'M ALSO A *SOLDIER*, COLONEL -- JUST LIKE *YOU*. IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ME AT ALL YOU KNOW I WOULD NEVER JEOPARDIZE THE SECURITY AND SAFETY OF MY COUNTRY.
NOT FOR AN AVENGER, NOT FOR A FRIEND-- NOT EVEN FOR THE PRESIDENT, IF IT CAME TO THAT.
I KNOW YOU'RE A *PATRIOT*, COL. MANNING. FOR THE LOVE OF GOD AND COUNTRY, IT IS YOUR *DUTY* TO RELEASE HENRY PYM.
LIKE IT OR NOT, HE MAY BE OUR ONLY HOPE OF VICTORY.

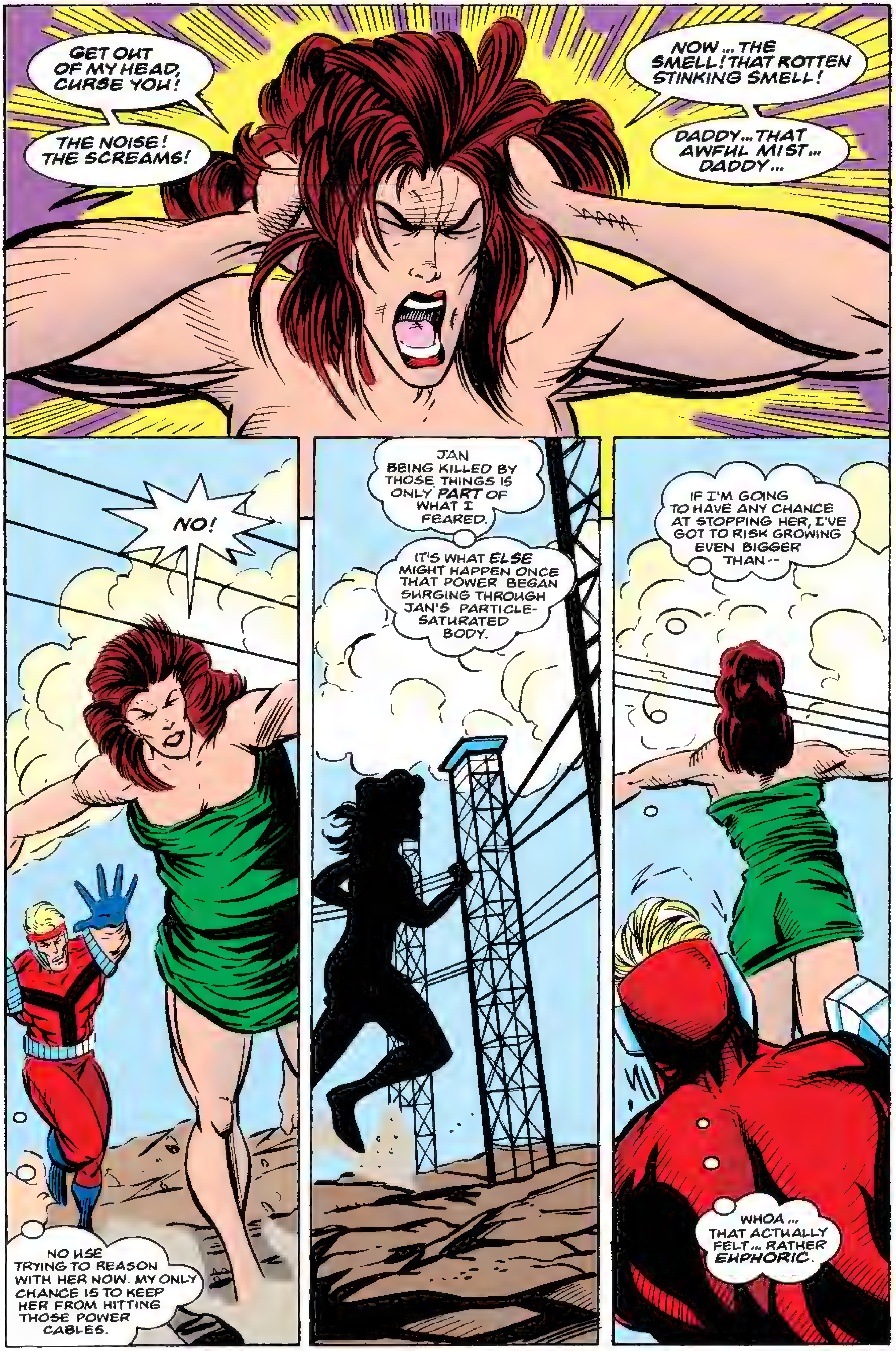

MEANWHILE, BACK WITHIN THE BOWELS OF THE B.I.G. COMPOUND, THE ALARMS WAIL EVEN MORE DESPERATELY--
--AND WHAT JANET VAN DYNE ONCE REFERRED TO AS A "GIANT ANT FARM" HAS NOW BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A STORM OF FLYING SAND AND SHATTERING GLASS.
I KNOW YOU'RE HERE! SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE! I CAN FEEL IT STRONGER THAN EVER!
I'LL FIND YOU! I'LL TRACK YOU DOWN AND TEAR YOUR FREAKIN' HEARTS OUT!
NO ONE ESCAPES TIGRA! YOU HEAR ME! NO ONE!!
IN ANOTHER SECTION OF THE COMPLEX, A TINY MAN'S HOWLS OF PAIN ARE BURIED BENEATH THE SECURITY SYSTEM'S BANSHEE-LIKE SCREAMS--
--INCESSANT, VIOLENT SCREAMS THAT MAY WELL DRIVE HIM BEYOND THE BRINK OF MADNESS.
WHILE LESS THAN SEVEN FEET AWAY--WHICH TO BILL FOSTER SEEMS MORE LIKE SEVEN MILES--HIS AMPLIFIED CRIES ECHO INSISTENTLY WITHIN THE CONFINES OF SCOTT LANG'S CYBERNETIC HELMET.
BUT SCOTT LANG DOESN'T HEAR FOSTER. HE DOESN'T HEAR THE SIRENS. IT IS DOUBTFUL, IN FACT, THAT THE SCIENTIST CALLED ANT-MAN HEARS ANYTHING AT ALL.

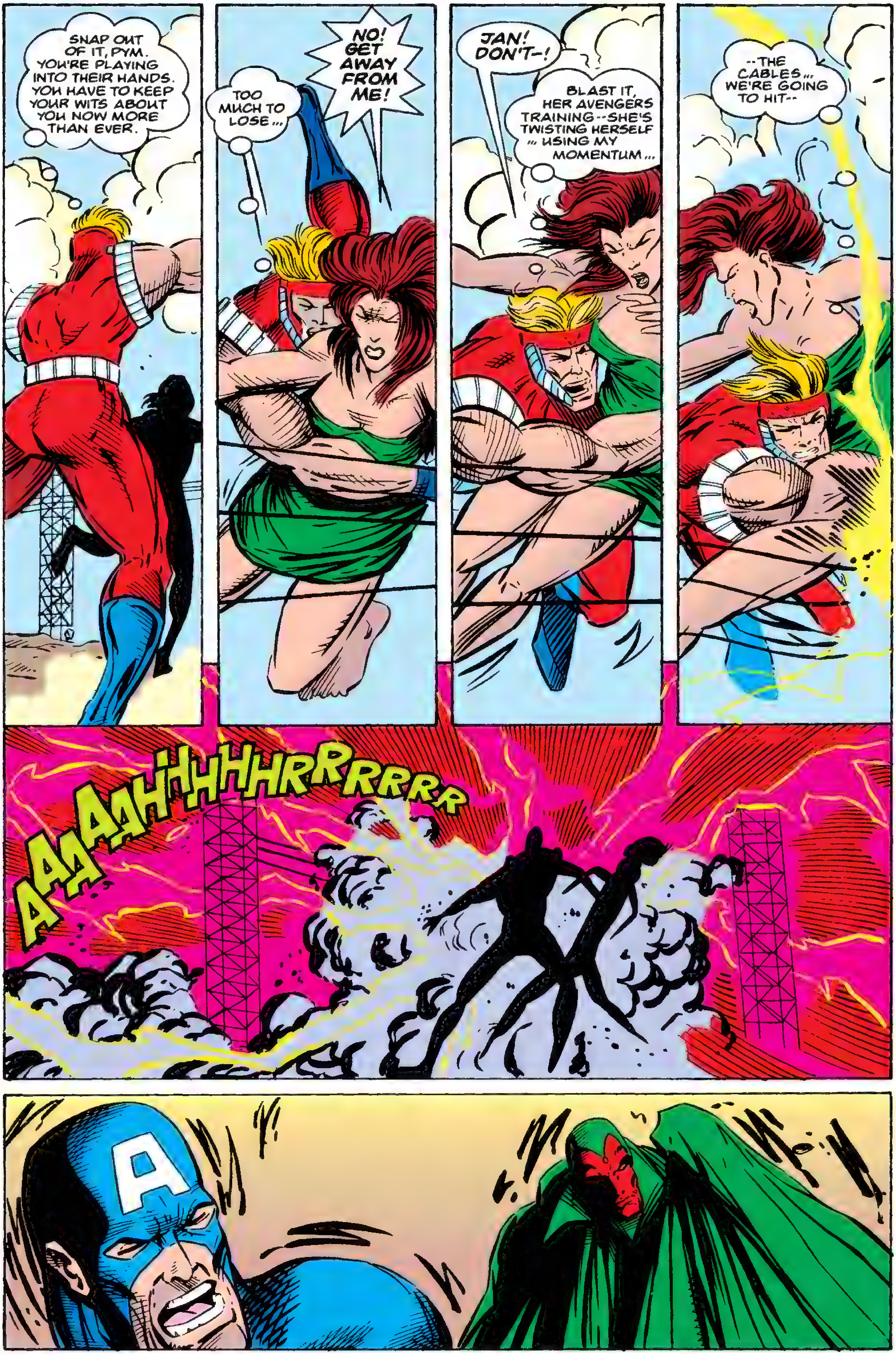

THANKS FOR GETTING ME OUT OF THERE, CAP. I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU, THAT I WAS GETTING PRETTY DESPERATE.
WELL, WE HAD A HUNCH THAT YOU MIGHT BE NEEDING A LITTLE HELP RIGHT ABOUT NOW. A DR. ROSSIN HAS BEEN KEEPING OUR HOTLINE BUSY.
WE THOUGHT HIS STORIES ABOUT JAN BEING A GIANT WERE CRANK CALLS AT FIRST--
AND I CURSE MYSELF FOR NOT FORESEEING THAT-- OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT-- HAPPENING EVENTUALLY. I JUST DIDN'T THINK HER EXPOSURE TO THE GARDEN WAS PROLONGED ENOUGH.
YOU SAY JAN AND THE INSECTS WERE CONTAMINATED IN SOME WAY BY THE B.I.G. PROJECT? THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN *THIS?*
I'M PATCHING YOU TO *TENNESSEE* THROUGH THE AVENGERS' GLOBAL LINK.
HEY... WHO'S CALLIN'?... CAP... IS THAT YOU?
HAWKEYE?
PYM! MAN... AM I GLAD... THEY FINALLY... FOUND YA...
I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND--
CLINT, YOUR VOICE -- YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE IN PAIN. WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WELL... LET'S... PUT IT... THIS... WAY...
I'VE FALLEN... AND... I CAN'T GET UP...
NEITHER DO I. CLINT SAYS HE JUST SUDDENLY BEGAN TO GROW FOR NO REASON AT ALL. FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL, IT ALL STARTED ABOUT THE SAME TIME YOU SAY THE GIANT BUGS WENT BERSERK. THE BIG PROBLEM, HOWEVER, WAS THAT THIS TIME CLINT'S MUSCLE STRUCTURE *DIDN'T* ADJUST TO THE SUDDEN GAIN IN MASS. IN FACT, THE MORE TIME THAT'S PASSED THE MORE HIS MUSCLES SEEM TO BE *DETERIORATING.*
HAWKEYE'S OVER 60-FEET TALL, AND HIS OWN BODY WEIGHT IS *CRUSHING* HIM.

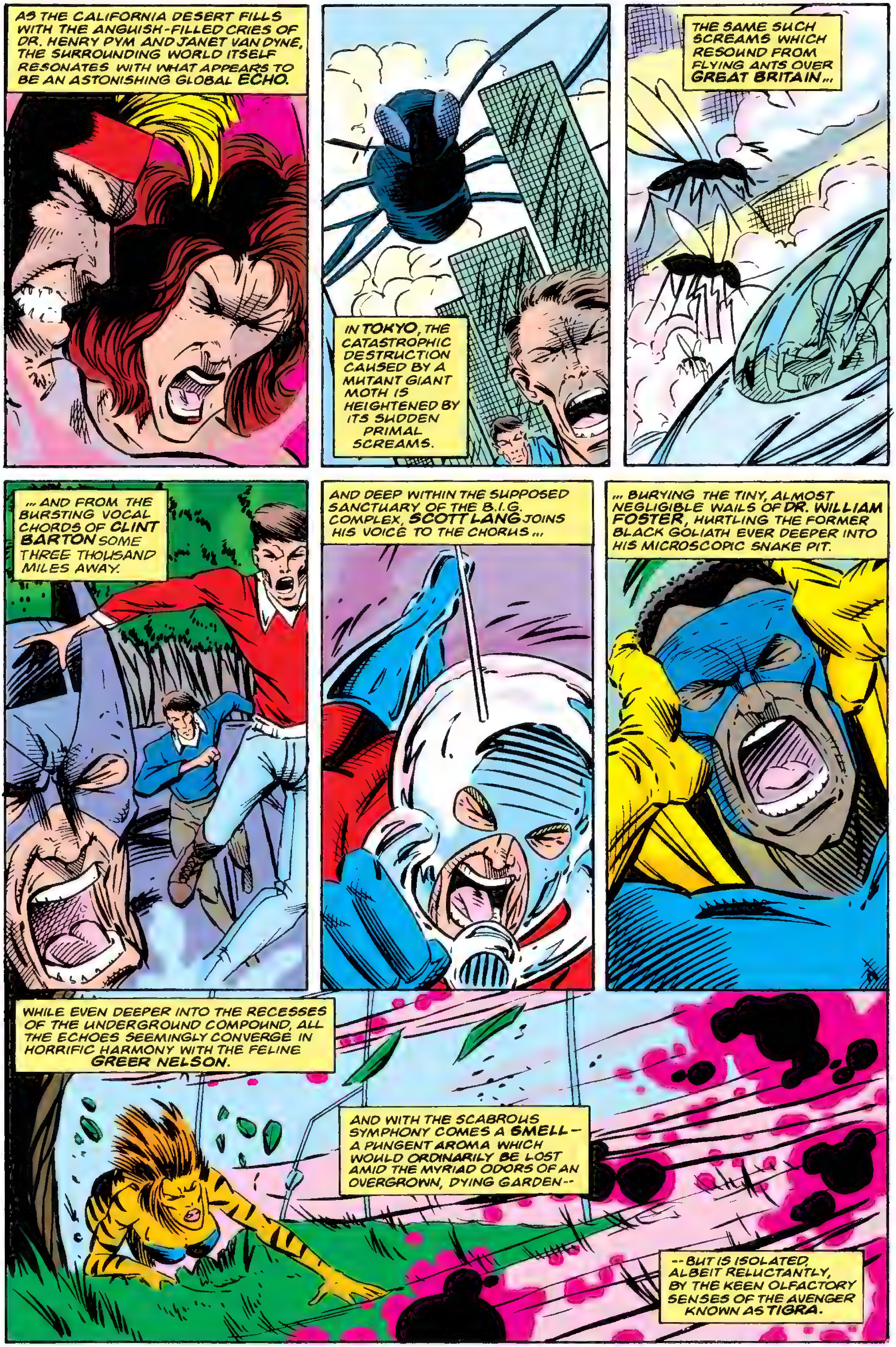

BUT... CLINT WAS NOWHERE NEAR THE COMPOUND...
DEAR LORD... COULD MANNING HAVE BEEN RIGHT AFTER ALL? COULD I HAVE BEEN THE CAUSE ALL THIS TIME?
SNAP OUT OF IT, AVENGER. SELF-PITY IS THE LAST THING WE NEED RIGHT NOW.
I'D SAY THE FIRST ITEM ON YOUR AGENDA IS SUGGESTING HOW WE'RE SUPPOSED TO TAKE CARE OF HER!
VISION! STATUS REPORT.
SO FAR ALL I HAVE MANAGED TO DO IS STEER HER SOMEWHAT AND PREVENT HER FROM KILLING ANYONE.
HOWEVER, CAP, I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG WE CAN CONTINUE THIS NON-CONFRONTATIONAL STRATEGY.
HANK! WHERE ARE YOU!? YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME. I NEED YOU!
HANK!!
"CAP, PATCH ME UP TO THE EXTERIOR SPEAKERS."
JAN! JAN, SWEETHEART. IT'S HANK! PLEASE, HONEY, IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT. I'M HERE!
I CAN'T SEE YOU! YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER VOICE IN MY HEAD! ANOTHER SCREAMING VOICE! DADDY'S, THE ANTS' ...THEIRS!
HANK! YOU HAVE TO STOP THEM!
THEY'RE ALMOST HERE!!
"WHO'S SHE TALKING ABOUT? HANK, DOES ANY OF THIS MAKE ANY SENSE TO YOU?"
"DEAR LORD... CAP, I THINK IT DOES."

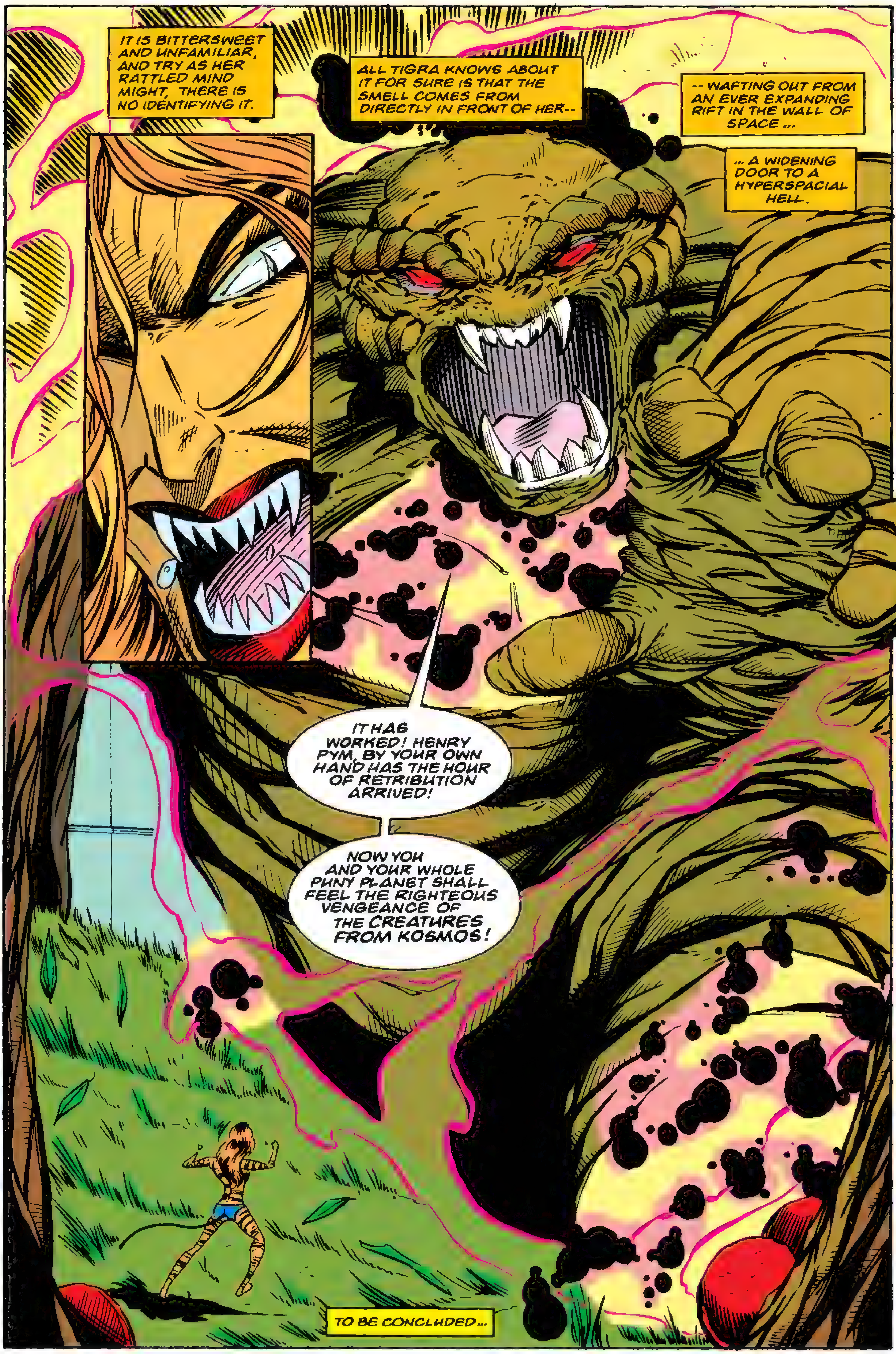

CAP, JANET IS HEADING TOWARD SOME POWER LINES. THERE IS NO WAY FOR ME TO REDIRECT HER FROM THEM.
UTILIZING MINIMUM DENSITY IN ORDER TO INTERFACE WITH SUCH A HUGE BODY IN MUTATION FLUX MAY CAUSE MORE HARM THAN GOOD.
PERHAPS A CONTROLLED OPTICAL BLAST OF ENERGY--?
NO, VISION! SOLAR ENERGY IS THE *LAST* THING WE NEED RIGHT NOW!
BACK OFF! THERE'S NOTHING MORE YOU AND YOUR AVENGERS CAN DO HERE!
BUT THE POWER LINES--
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE BLASTED POWER LINES! GET AWAY FROM THERE!
VISION TO CAPTAIN AMERICA. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
CAP, QUICKLY-- WHAT *DATE* IS THIS?
DATE!? JUNE 26TH. WHY?
SEVEN YEARS AGO TODAY. IT ALL FITS.
CAP, PULL THE VISION BACK AND GET THIS QUINJET AT LEAST A QUARTER OF A MILE AWAY. THIS IS *MY* GAUNTLET TO CROSS. THERE'S NO ONE ELSE WHO CAN DO IT NOW.
PLEASE, OLD FRIEND. I KNOW THAT I'VE NOT HAD THE MOST IMPECCABLE TRACK RECORD REGARDING MY PAST EXPERIMENTS OR PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE, BUT...I IMPLORE YOU...YOU'VE GOT TO *TRUST* ME ON THIS ONE.
CAPTAIN AMERICA TO VISION... PULL BACK.
THIS IS *GIANT-MAN'S* SHOW NOW.


"GOOD LUCK... OLD FRIEND."
THANKS, CAP. I MOST DEFINITELY AM GOING TO NEED IT.
THIS WORKED WITH THE GIANT INSECTS IN THE DESERT...
...ACCELERATE MY PARTICLE GAIN, DOUBLE MY GROWTH SPEED...
THE SUDDEN FLUX FROM THE EXPANSION FIELD SHOULD AT LEAST DISTRACT HER...
HANK!
BINGO.
ALTHOUGH AT 25 FEET I MAY STILL HAVE COME UP A BIT SHORT.
JAN! IT'S ALL RIGHT, SWEETHEART. I'M HERE. IT'S ALL GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT!
IT WAS YOU!
HUH?
THAT'S WHAT THE VOICES HAVE BEEN TRYING TO TELL ME! THAT'S THE PAIN I'VE BEEN FEELING... THE PAIN I FELT JUST NOW!
IT WAS YOU!
BLAST IT, HANK, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THAT ONE COMING. IT'S THE PERFECT DENOUEMENT FOR THIS IRONY-LADEN SCENARIO.

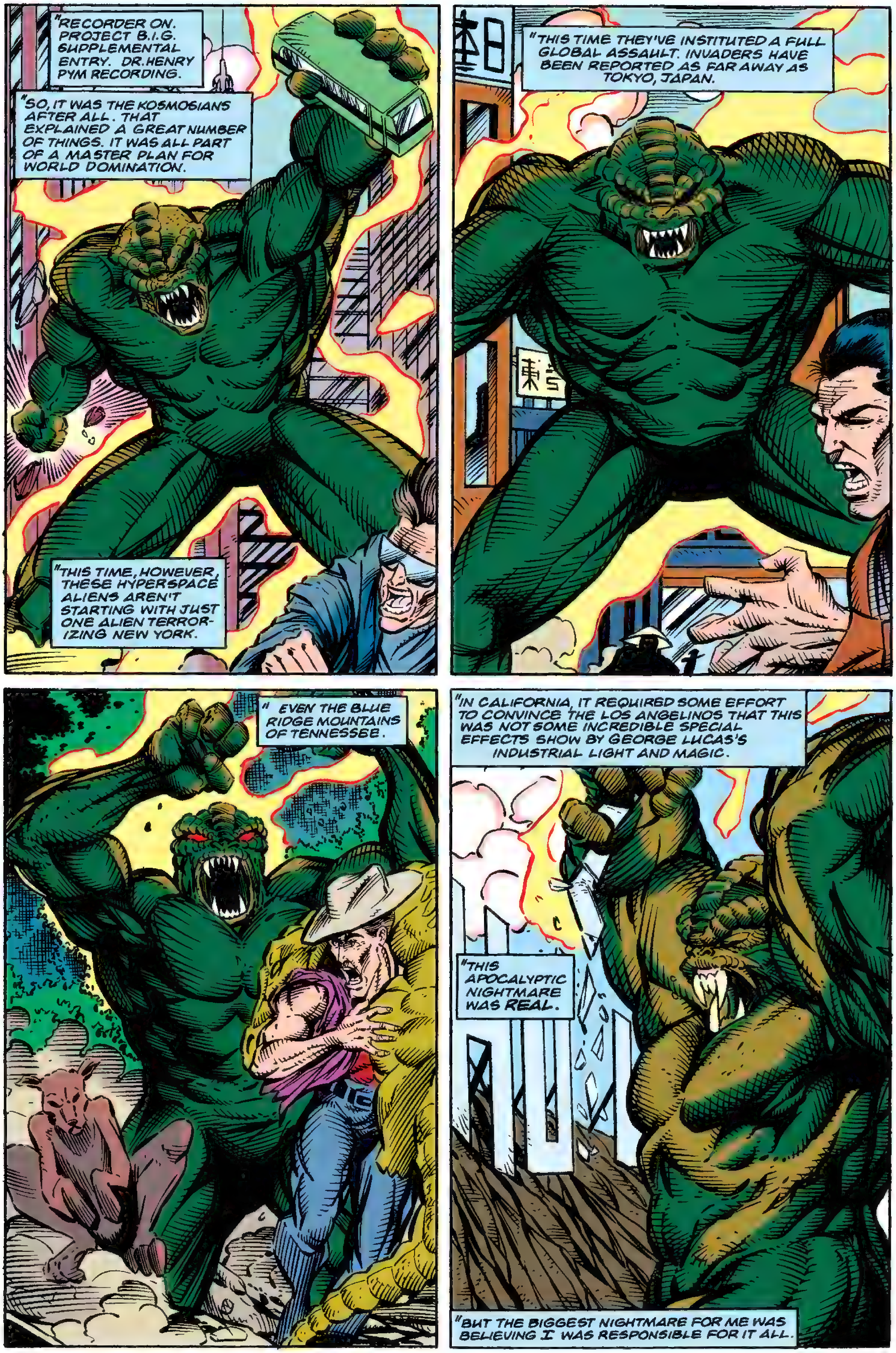

GET OUT OF MY HEAD, CURSE YOU!
THE NOISE! THE SCREAMS!
NOW... THE SMELL! THAT ROTTEN STINKING SMELL!
DADDY... THAT AWFUL MIST... DADDY...
NO!
NO USE TRYING TO REASON WITH HER NOW. MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO KEEP HER FROM HITTING THOSE POWER CABLES.
JAN BEING KILLED BY THOSE THINGS IS ONLY PART OF WHAT I FEARED.
IT'S WHAT ELSE MIGHT HAPPEN ONCE THAT POWER BEGAN SURGING THROUGH JAN'S PARTICLE-SATURATED BODY.
IF I'M GOING TO HAVE ANY CHANCE AT STOPPING HER, I'VE GOT TO RISK GROWING EVEN BIGGER THAN--
WHOA... THAT ACTUALLY FELT... RATHER EUPHORIC.

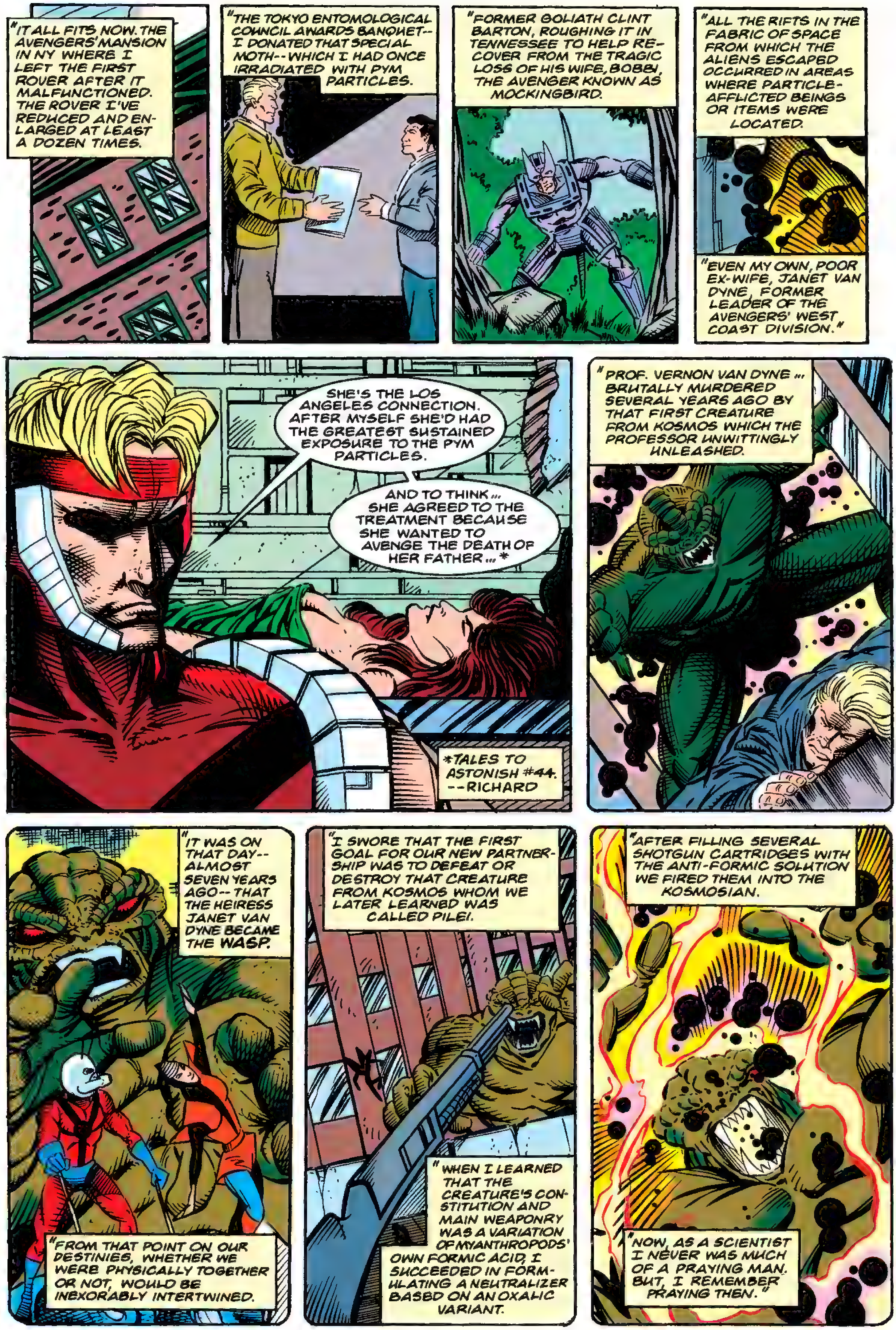

SNAP OUT OF IT, PYM. YOU'RE PLAYING INTO THEIR HANDS. YOU HAVE TO KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER.
TOO MUCH TO LOSE...
NO! GET AWAY FROM ME!
JAN! DON'T-!
BLAST IT, HER AVENGERS TRAINING--SHE'S TWISTING HERSELF ... USING MY MOMENTUM...
--THE CABLES... WE'RE GOING TO HIT--
AAAAAHHHHHRRRRRRR

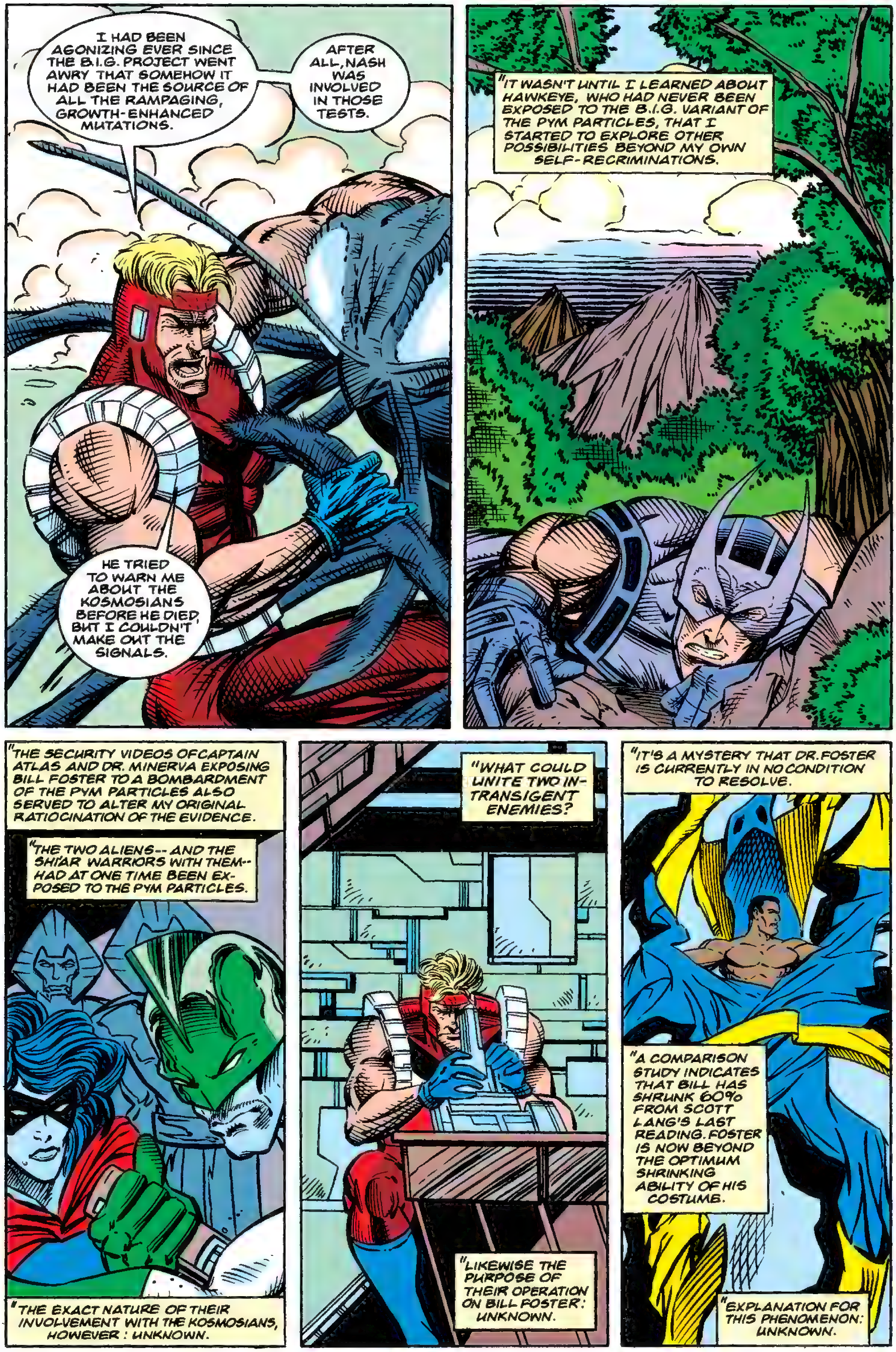

AS THE CALIFORNIA DESERT FILLS WITH THE ANGUISH-FILLED CRIES OF DR. HENRY PYM AND JANET VAN DYNE, THE SURROUNDING WORLD ITSELF RESONATES WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN ASTONISHING GLOBAL ECHO.
IN TOKYO, THE CATASTROPHIC DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY A MUTANT GIANT MOTH IS HEIGHTENED BY ITS SUDDEN PRIMAL SCREAMS.
THE SAME SUCH SCREAMS WHICH RESOUND FROM FLYING ANTS OVER GREAT BRITAIN...
...AND FROM THE BURSTING VOCAL CHORDS OF CLINT BARTON SOME THREE THOUSAND MILES AWAY.
AND DEEP WITHIN THE SUPPOSED SANCTUARY OF THE B.I.G. COMPLEX, SCOTT LANG JOINS HIS VOICE TO THE CHORUS...
...BURYING THE TINY, ALMOST NEGLIGIBLE WAILS OF DR. WILLIAM FOSTER, HURTLING THE FORMER BLACK GOLIATH EVER DEEPER INTO HIS MICROSCOPIC SNAKE PIT.
WHILE EVEN DEEPER INTO THE RECESSES OF THE UNDERGROUND COMPOUND, ALL THE ECHOES SEEMINGLY CONVERGE IN HORRIFIC HARMONY WITH THE FELINE GREER NELSON.
AND WITH THE SCABROUS SYMPHONY COMES A SMELL-- A PUNGENT AROMA WHICH WOULD ORDINARILY BE LOST AMID THE MYRIAD ODORS OF AN OVERGROWN, DYING GARDEN--
--BUT IS ISOLATED, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY, BY THE KEEN OLFACTORY SENSES OF THE AVENGER KNOWN AS TIGRA.

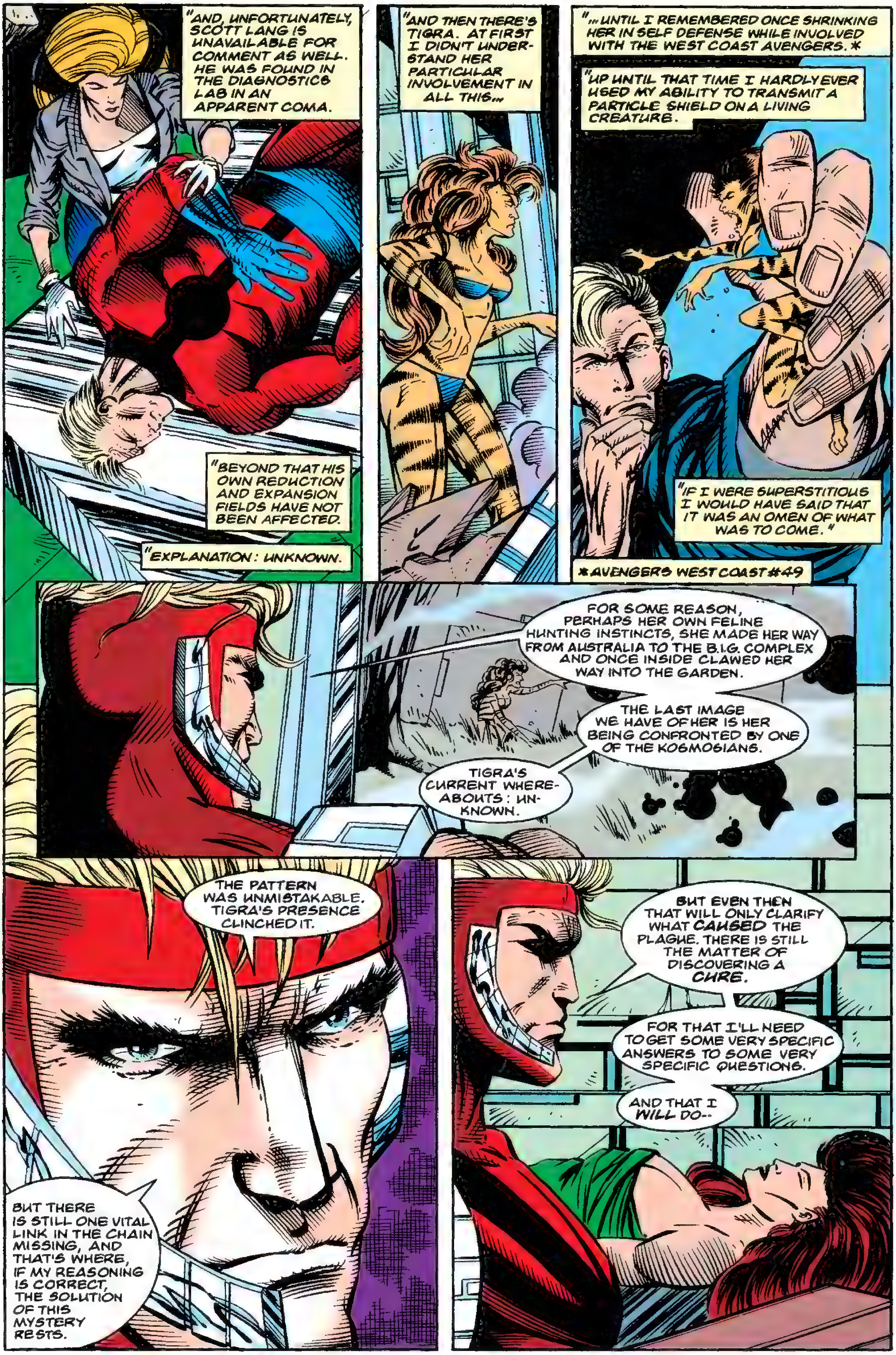

IT IS BITTERSWEET AND UNFAMILIAR, AND TRY AS HER RATTLED MIND MIGHT, THERE IS NO IDENTIFYING IT.
ALL TIGRA KNOWS ABOUT IT FOR SURE IS THAT THE SMELL COMES FROM DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF HER--
-- WAFTING OUT FROM AN EVER EXPANDING RIFT IN THE WALL OF SPACE ...
... A WIDENING DOOR TO A HYPERSPACIAL HELL.
IT HAS WORKED! HENRY PYM, BY YOUR OWN HAND HAS THE HOUR OF RETRIBUTION ARRIVED!
NOW YOU AND YOUR WHOLE PUNY PLANET SHALL FEEL THE RIGHTEOUS VENGEANCE OF THE CREATURES FROM KOSMOS!
TO BE CONCLUDED...

MARVEL COMICS
382
JAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
AVENGERS
GIANT MAN
DOUBLE FEATURE


"RECORDER ON. PROJECT B.I.G. SUPPLEMENTAL ENTRY. DR. HENRY PYM RECORDING.
"SO, IT WAS THE KOSMOSIANS AFTER ALL. THAT EXPLAINED A GREAT NUMBER OF THINGS. IT WAS ALL PART OF A MASTER PLAN FOR WORLD DOMINATION.
"THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THESE HYPERSPACE ALIENS AREN'T STARTING WITH JUST ONE ALIEN TERRORIZING NEW YORK.
"THIS TIME THEY'VE INSTITUTED A FULL GLOBAL ASSAULT. INVADERS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AS FAR AWAY AS TOKYO, JAPAN.
" EVEN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS OF TENNESSEE.
"IN CALIFORNIA, IT REQUIRED SOME EFFORT TO CONVINCE THE LOS ANGELINOS THAT THIS WAS NOT SOME INCREDIBLE SPECIAL EFFECTS SHOW BY GEORGE LUCAS'S INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGIC.
"THIS APOCALYPTIC NIGHTMARE WAS REAL.
"BUT THE BIGGEST NIGHTMARE FOR ME WAS BELIEVING I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT ALL.


"IT ALL FITS NOW. THE AVENGERS' MANSION IN NY WHERE I LEFT THE FIRST ROVER AFTER IT MALFUNCTIONED. THE ROVER I'VE REDUCED AND ENLARGED AT LEAST A DOZEN TIMES.
"THE TOKYO ENTOMOLOGICAL COUNCIL AWARDS BANQUET-- I DONATED THAT SPECIAL MOTH--WHICH I HAD ONCE IRRADIATED WITH PYM PARTICLES.
"FORMER GOLIATH CLINT BARTON, ROUGHING IT IN TENNESSEE TO HELP RECOVER FROM THE TRAGIC LOSS OF HIS WIFE, BOBBI, THE AVENGER KNOWN AS MOCKINGBIRD.
"ALL THE RIFTS IN THE FABRIC OF SPACE FROM WHICH THE ALIENS ESCAPED OCCURRED IN AREAS WHERE PARTICLE-AFFLICTED BEINGS OR ITEMS WERE LOCATED.
"EVEN MY OWN, POOR EX-WIFE, JANET VAN DYNE, FORMER LEADER OF THE AVENGERS' WEST COAST DIVISION."
SHE'S THE LOS ANGELES CONNECTION. AFTER MYSELF SHE'D HAD THE GREATEST SUSTAINED EXPOSURE TO THE PYM PARTICLES.
AND TO THINK... SHE AGREED TO THE TREATMENT BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO AVENGE THE DEATH OF HER FATHER...*
*TALES TO ASTONISH #44. --RICHARD
"PROF. VERNON VAN DYNE... BRUTALLY MURDERED SEVERAL YEARS AGO BY THAT FIRST CREATURE FROM KOSMOS WHICH THE PROFESSOR UNWITTINGLY UNLEASHED.
"IT WAS ON THAT DAY-- ALMOST SEVEN YEARS AGO--THAT THE HEIRESS JANET VAN DYNE BECAME THE WASP.
"FROM THAT POINT ON OUR DESTINIES, WHETHER WE WERE PHYSICALLY TOGETHER OR NOT, WOULD BE INEXORABLY INTERTWINED.
"I SWORE THAT THE FIRST GOAL FOR OUR NEW PARTNERSHIP WAS TO DEFEAT OR DESTROY THAT CREATURE FROM KOSMOS WHOM WE LATER LEARNED WAS CALLED PILEI.
"WHEN I LEARNED THAT THE CREATURE'S CONSTITUTION AND MAIN WEAPONRY WAS A VARIATION OF MYANTHROPODS' OWN FORMIC ACID, I SUCCEEDED IN FORMULATING A NEUTRALIZER BASED ON AN OXALIC VARIANT.
"AFTER FILLING SEVERAL SHOTGUN CARTRIDGES WITH THE ANTI-FORMIC SOLUTION WE FIRED THEM INTO THE KOSMOSIAN.
"NOW, AS A SCIENTIST I NEVER WAS MUCH OF A PRAYING MAN. BUT, I REMEMBER PRAYING THEN."


I HAD BEEN AGONIZING EVER SINCE THE B.I.G. PROJECT WENT AWRY THAT SOMEHOW IT HAD BEEN THE SOURCE OF ALL THE RAMPAGING, GROWTH-ENHANCED MUTATIONS.
AFTER ALL, NASH WAS INVOLVED IN THOSE TESTS.
HE TRIED TO WARN ME ABOUT THE KOSMOSIANS BEFORE HE DIED, BUT I COULDN'T MAKE OUT THE SIGNALS.
"IT WASN'T UNTIL I LEARNED ABOUT HAWKEYE, WHO HAD NEVER BEEN EXPOSED TO THE B.I.G. VARIANT OF THE PYM PARTICLES, THAT I STARTED TO EXPLORE OTHER POSSIBILITIES BEYOND MY OWN SELF-RECRIMINATIONS.
"THE SECURITY VIDEOS OF CAPTAIN ATLAS AND DR. MINERVA EXPOSING BILL FOSTER TO A BOMBARDMENT OF THE PYM PARTICLES ALSO SERVED TO ALTER MY ORIGINAL RATIOCINATION OF THE EVIDENCE.
"THE TWO ALIENS-- AND THE SHI'AR WARRIORS WITH THEM-- HAD AT ONE TIME BEEN EXPOSED TO THE PYM PARTICLES.
"THE EXACT NATURE OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE KOSMOSIANS, HOWEVER : UNKNOWN.
"WHAT COULD UNITE TWO INTRANSIGENT ENEMIES?
"LIKEWISE THE PURPOSE OF THEIR OPERATION ON BILL FOSTER: UNKNOWN.
"IT'S A MYSTERY THAT DR. FOSTER IS CURRENTLY IN NO CONDITION TO RESOLVE.
"A COMPARISON STUDY INDICATES THAT BILL HAS SHRUNK 60% FROM SCOTT LANG'S LAST READING. FOSTER IS NOW BEYOND THE OPTIMUM SHRINKING ABILITY OF HIS COSTUME.
"EXPLANATION FOR THIS PHENOMENON: UNKNOWN.


"AND, UNFORTUNATELY, SCOTT LANG IS UNAVAILABLE FOR COMMENT AS WELL. HE WAS FOUND IN THE DIAGNOSTICS LAB IN AN APPARENT COMA.
"BEYOND THAT HIS OWN REDUCTION AND EXPANSION FIELDS HAVE NOT BEEN AFFECTED.
"EXPLANATION: UNKNOWN.
"AND THEN THERE'S TIGRA. AT FIRST I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HER PARTICULAR INVOLVEMENT IN ALL THIS...
"...UNTIL I REMEMBERED ONCE SHRINKING HER IN SELF DEFENSE WHILE INVOLVED WITH THE WEST COAST AVENGERS.*
"UP UNTIL THAT TIME I HARDLY EVER USED MY ABILITY TO TRANSMIT A PARTICLE SHIELD ON A LIVING CREATURE.
"IF I WERE SUPERSTITIOUS I WOULD HAVE SAID THAT IT WAS AN OMEN OF WHAT WAS TO COME."
*AVENGERS WEST COAST #49
FOR SOME REASON, PERHAPS HER OWN FELINE HUNTING INSTINCTS, SHE MADE HER WAY FROM AUSTRALIA TO THE B.I.G. COMPLEX AND ONCE INSIDE CLAWED HER WAY INTO THE GARDEN.
THE LAST IMAGE WE HAVE OF HER IS HER BEING CONFRONTED BY ONE OF THE KOSMOSIANS.
TIGRA'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS: UNKNOWN.
THE PATTERN WAS UNMISTAKABLE. TIGRA'S PRESENCE CLINCHED IT.
BUT THERE IS STILL ONE VITAL LINK IN THE CHAIN MISSING, AND THAT'S WHERE, IF MY REASONING IS CORRECT, THE SOLUTION OF THIS MYSTERY RESTS.
BUT EVEN THEN THAT WILL ONLY CLARIFY WHAT **CAUSED** THE PLAGUE. THERE IS STILL THE MATTER OF DISCOVERING A **CURE**.
FOR THAT I'LL NEED TO GET SOME VERY SPECIFIC ANSWERS TO SOME VERY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS.
AND THAT I **WILL** DO--

--EVEN IF I HAVE TO RIP THEM OUT OF SOME KOSMOSIAN'S THROAT!
RECORDER OFF.

HANK THE GIANT KILLER

WRITTEN BY GEORGE PÉREZ
PENCILED BY JEFFREY MOORE
INKED BY TIMOTHY DZON
LETTERED BY ELLIE DE VILLE
COLORED BY MARIANNE LIGHTLE
EDITED BY RICHARD ASHFORD
GROUP EDITOR: RALPH MACCHIO
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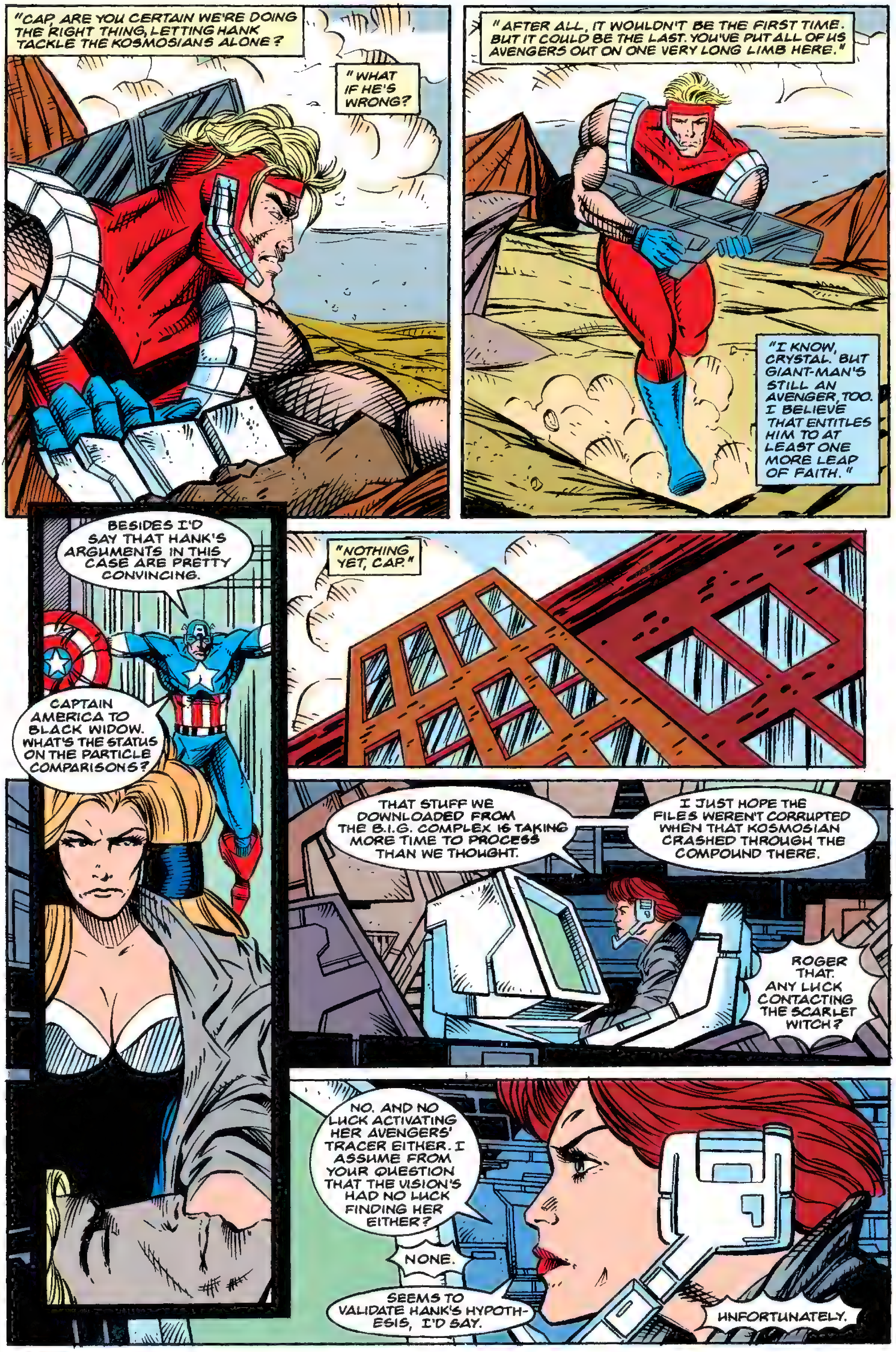
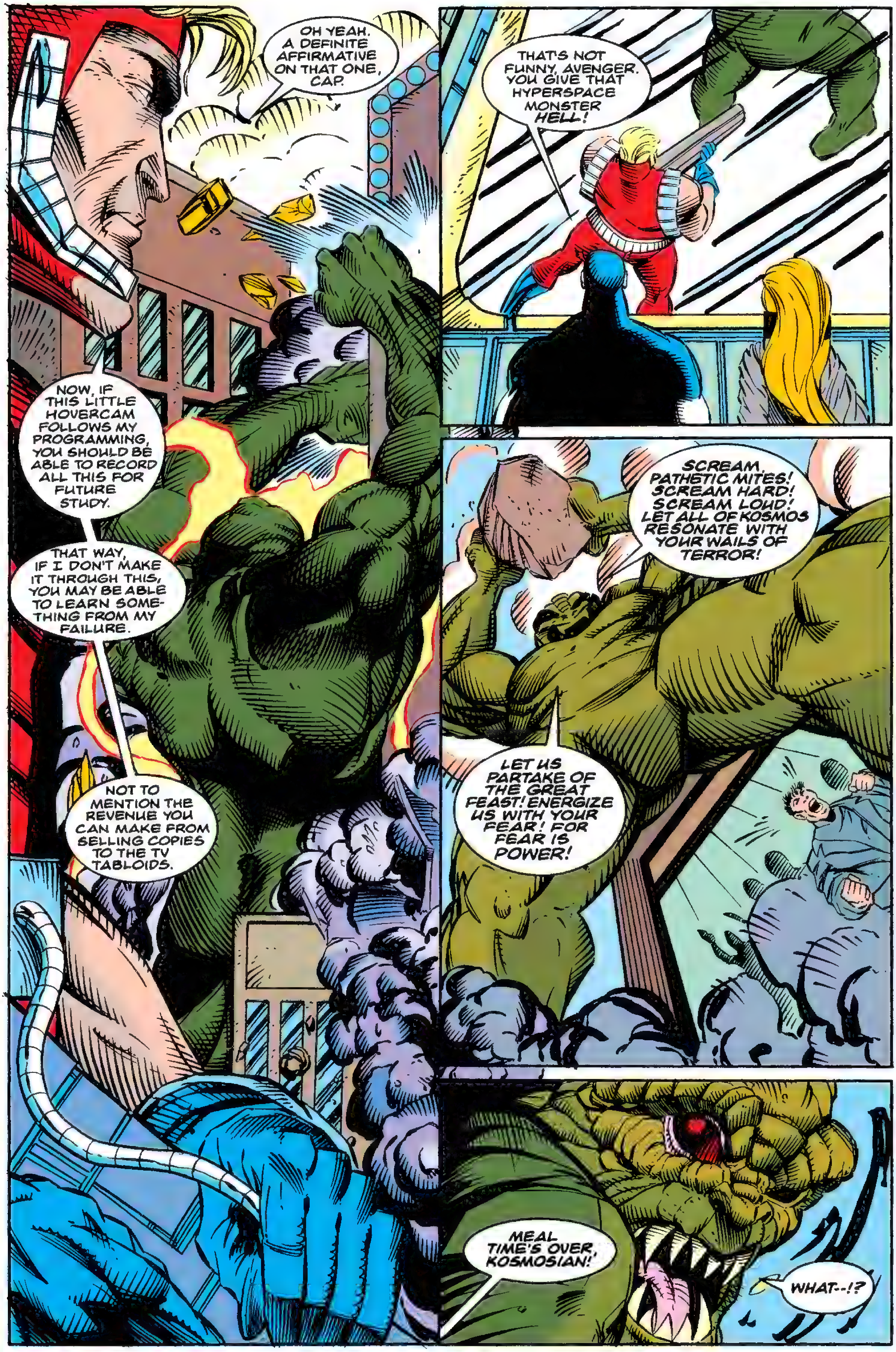
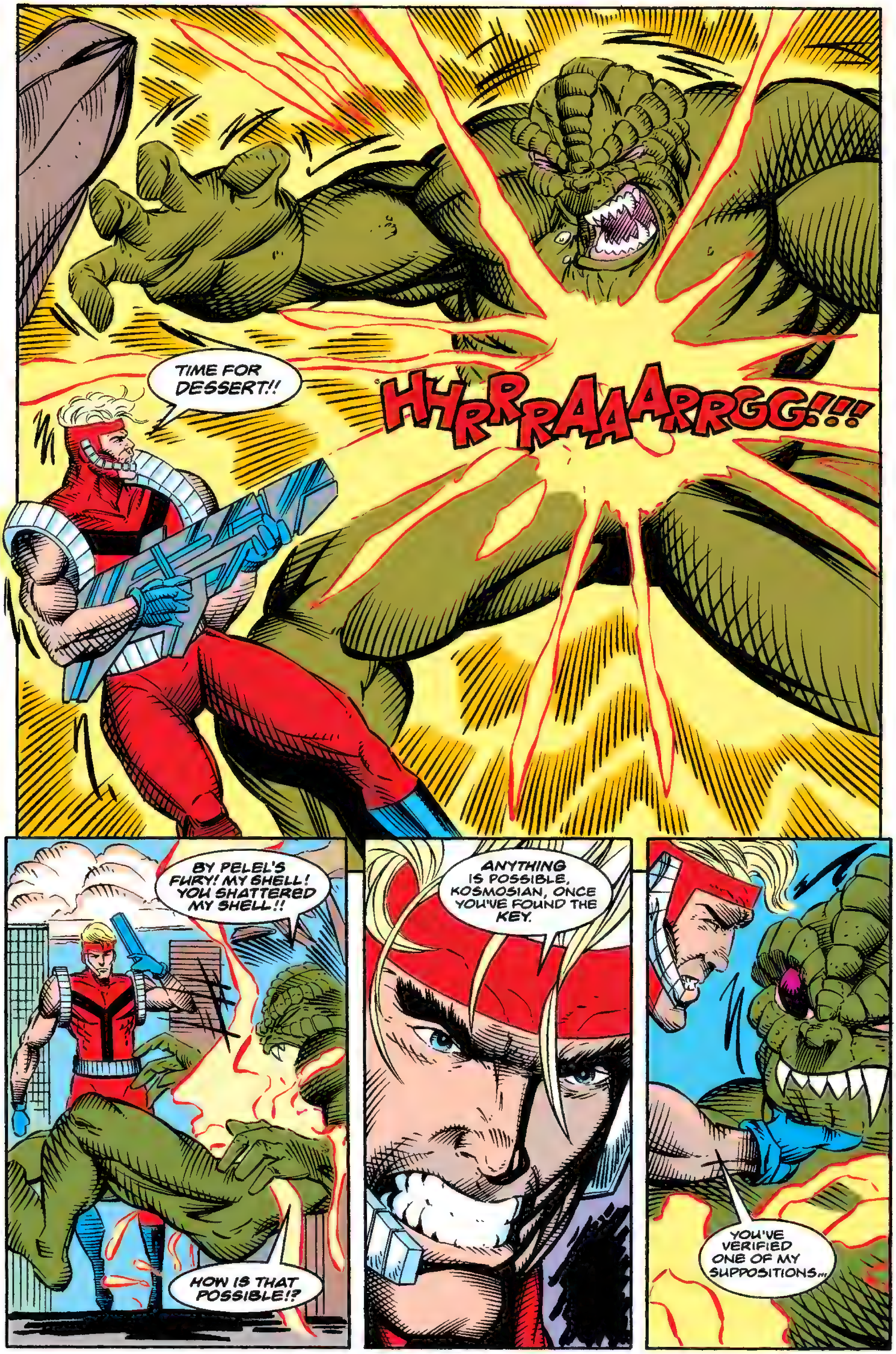
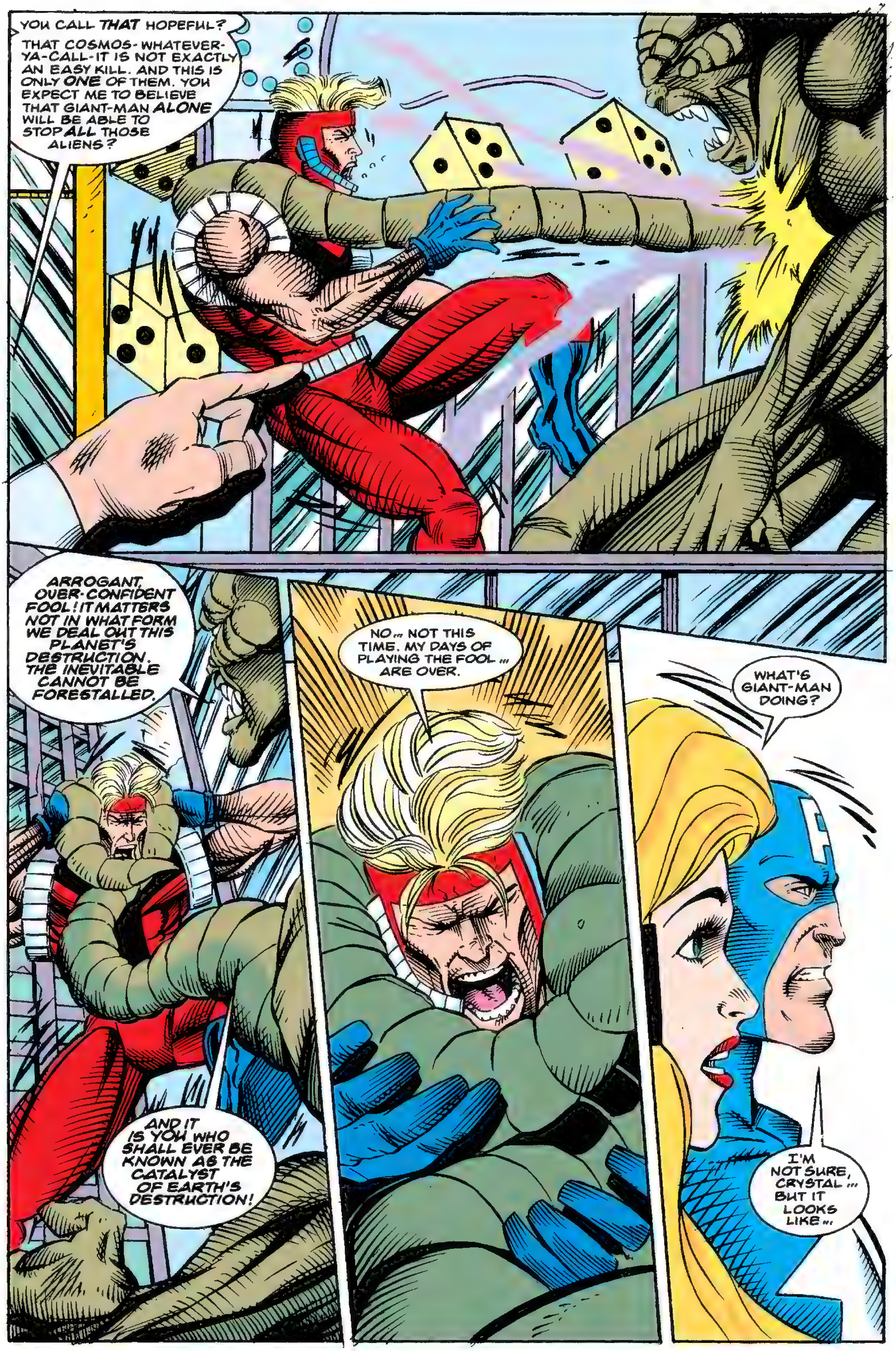

"CAP, ARE YOU CERTAIN WE'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING, LETTING HANK TACKLE THE KOSMOSIANS ALONE?
"WHAT IF HE'S WRONG?
"AFTER ALL, IT WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TIME. BUT IT COULD BE THE LAST. YOU'VE PUT ALL OF US AVENGERS OUT ON ONE VERY LONG LIMB HERE."
"I KNOW, CRYSTAL. BUT GIANT-MAN'S STILL AN AVENGER, TOO. I BELIEVE THAT ENTITLES HIM TO AT LEAST ONE MORE LEAP OF FAITH."
BESIDES I'D SAY THAT HANK'S ARGUMENTS IN THIS CASE ARE PRETTY CONVINCING.
CAPTAIN AMERICA TO BLACK WIDOW. WHAT'S THE STATUS ON THE PARTICLE COMPARISONS?
"NOTHING YET, CAP."
THAT STUFF WE DOWNLOADED FROM THE B.I.G. COMPLEX IS TAKING MORE TIME TO PROCESS THAN WE THOUGHT.
I JUST HOPE THE FILES WEREN'T CORRUPTED WHEN THAT KOSMOSIAN CRASHED THROUGH THE COMPOUND THERE.
ROGER THAT. ANY LUCK CONTACTING THE SCARLET WITCH?
NO. AND NO LUCK ACTIVATING HER AVENGERS' TRACER EITHER. I ASSUME FROM YOUR QUESTION THAT THE VISION'S HAD NO LUCK FINDING HER EITHER?
NONE.
SEEMS TO VALIDATE HANK'S HYPOTHESIS, I'D SAY.
UNFORTUNATELY.

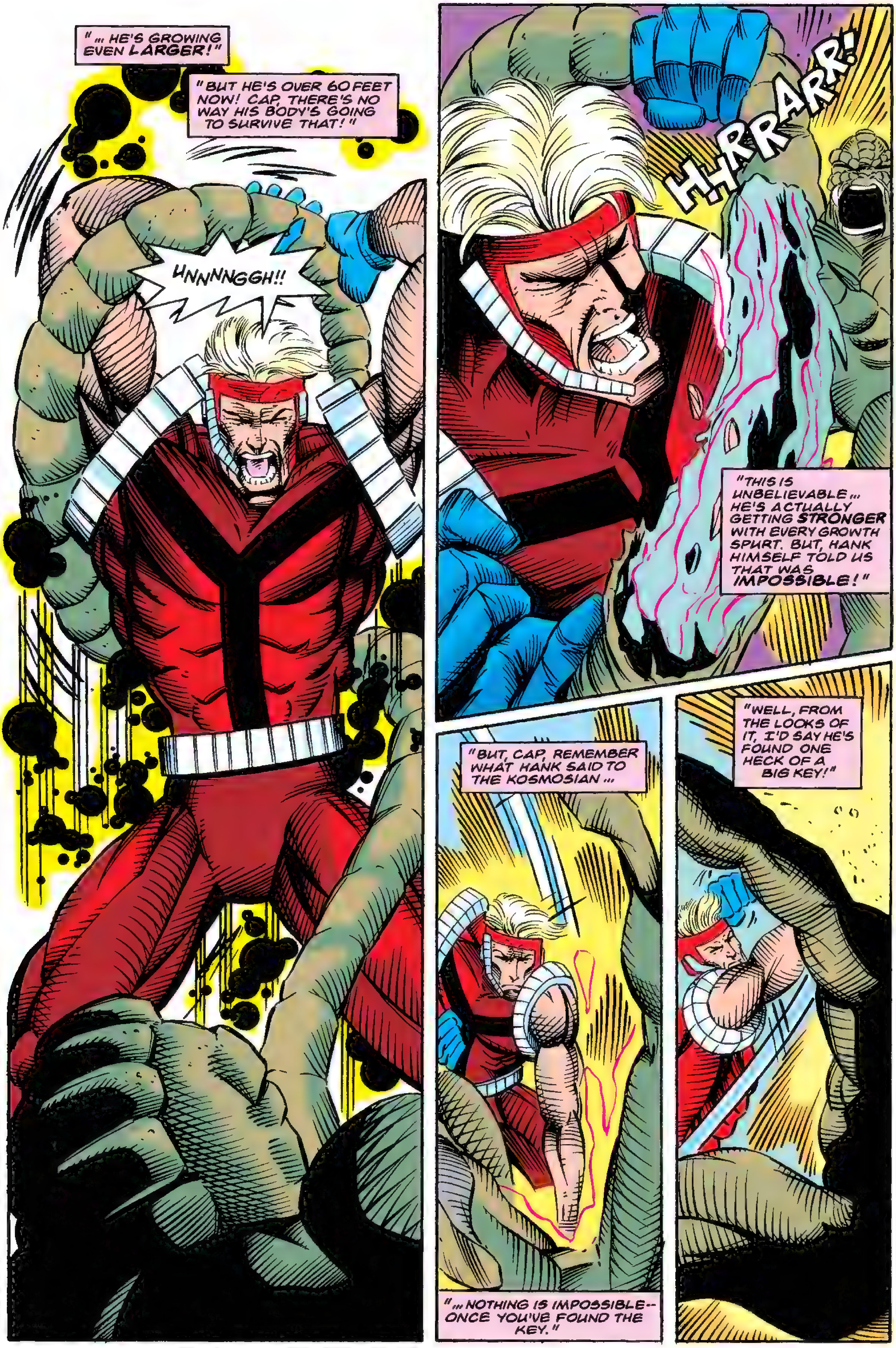
BUT, CAP, WOULDN'T WE HAVE AT LEAST **HEARD** IF WANDA HAD GONE THROUGH SOME SORT OF SIZE CHANGE LIKE JAN AND CLINT?
IF HANK'S RIGHT THIS PLAGUE SEEMS TO MANIFEST ITSELF DIFFERENTLY IN EVERY EXPOSED INDIVIDUAL. LOOK AT ANT-MAN AND DR. WILSON.
AND YOU THINK WANDA'S DISAPPEARANCE MAY BE ONE SUCH INDIVIDUAL MANIFESTATION?
A POSSIBILITY-- ACCORDING TO HANK.
THE SOLE COMMONALITY BEING EXPOSURE TO THE PYM PARTICLES, OR A **VARIANT**, A **MUTATION** OF THE PARTICLES, ACCORDING TO HANK.
RIGHT. WITH WONDER MAN DEAD, WE'RE LEFT WITH ONLY **ONE** UNACCOUNTED FOR PARTICLE SUBJECT...
...WHO MAY VERY WELL BE AT THE CENTER OF THIS FIRESTORM.
ACCORDING TO HANK.
CAP... ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT ALLOWING A SENSE OF LOYALTY TO AN OLD FRIEND TO CLOUD YOUR JUDGMENT? WASN'T IT GIANT-MAN WHO RESCUED YOU WHEN YOUR FROZEN BODY WAS FOUND IN THE OCEAN?
THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MY DECISION! OUR INITIAL ASSAULTS--
HELLO. SORRY TO INTERRUPT.
GIANT-MAN-- HANK... I'M SORRY IF I SOUNDED... WELL, ACCUSATORY--
QUITE ALL RIGHT, CRYSTAL. YOU HAVEN'T ACCUSED ME OF ANYTHING THAT I HAVEN'T ACCUSED MYSELF OF COUNTLESS TIMES THESE LAST FEW DAYS.
I SUPPOSE NOW'S THE TIME TO FIND OUT JUST HOW WRONG OR RIGHT WE ACTUALLY ARE.
NO WORD FROM 'TASHA YET, I ASSUME.
NOT YET. HAVE YOU REACHED YOUR TARGET?

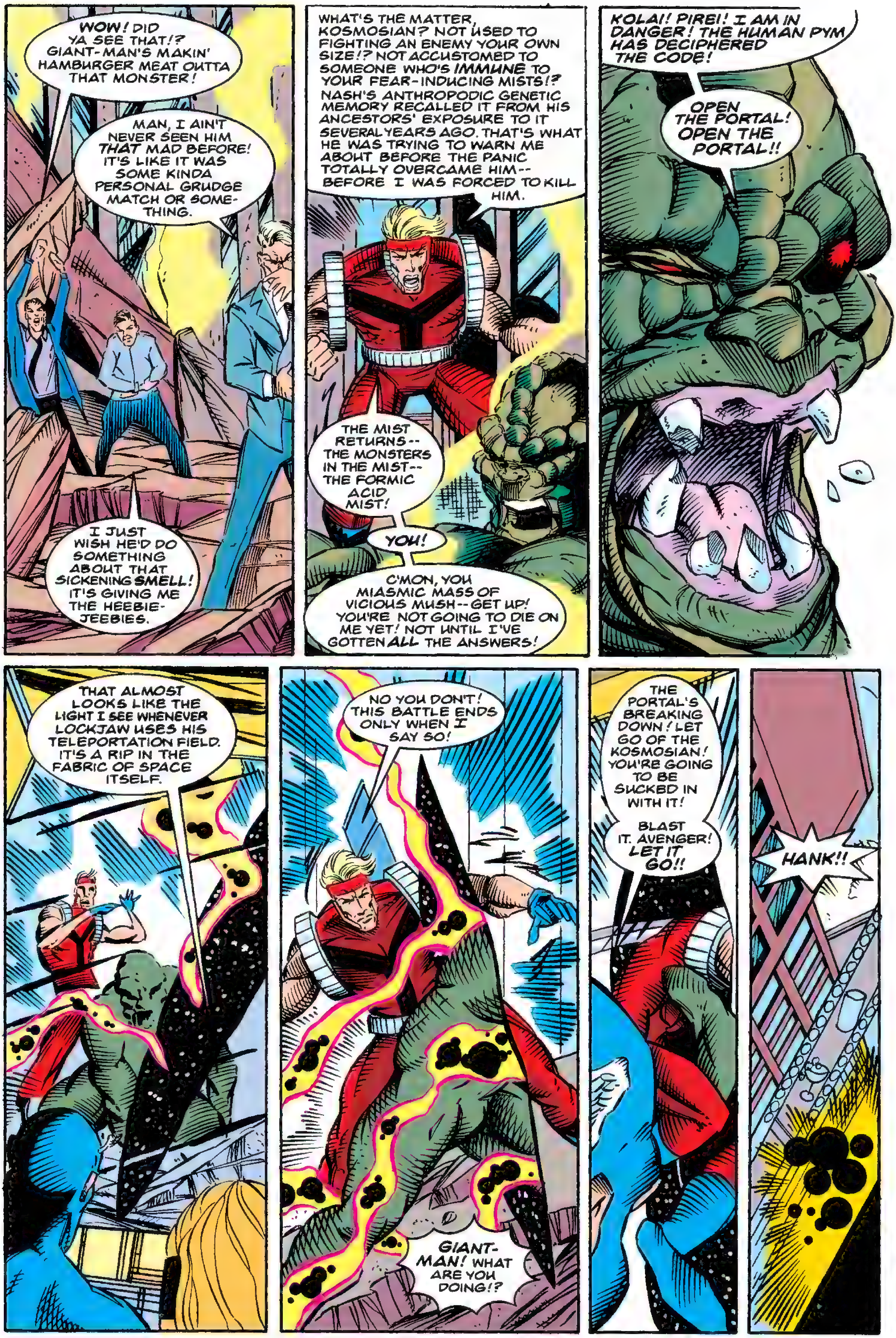

OH YEAH. A DEFINITE AFFIRMATIVE ON THAT ONE, CAP.
NOW, IF THIS LITTLE HOVERCAM FOLLOWS MY PROGRAMMING, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO RECORD ALL THIS FOR FUTURE STUDY.
THAT WAY, IF I DON'T MAKE IT THROUGH THIS, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO LEARN SOMETHING FROM MY FAILURE.
NOT TO MENTION THE REVENUE YOU CAN MAKE FROM SELLING COPIES TO THE TV TABLOIDS.
THAT'S NOT FUNNY, AVENGER. YOU GIVE THAT HYPERSPACE MONSTER *HELL!*
SCREAM, PATHETIC MITES! *SCREAM HARD! SCREAM LOUD!* LET ALL OF KOSMOS RESONATE WITH YOUR WAILS OF TERROR!
LET US PARTAKE OF THE GREAT FEAST! ENERGIZE US WITH YOUR FEAR! FOR FEAR IS POWER!
MEAL TIME'S OVER, KOSMOSIAN!
WHAT--!?

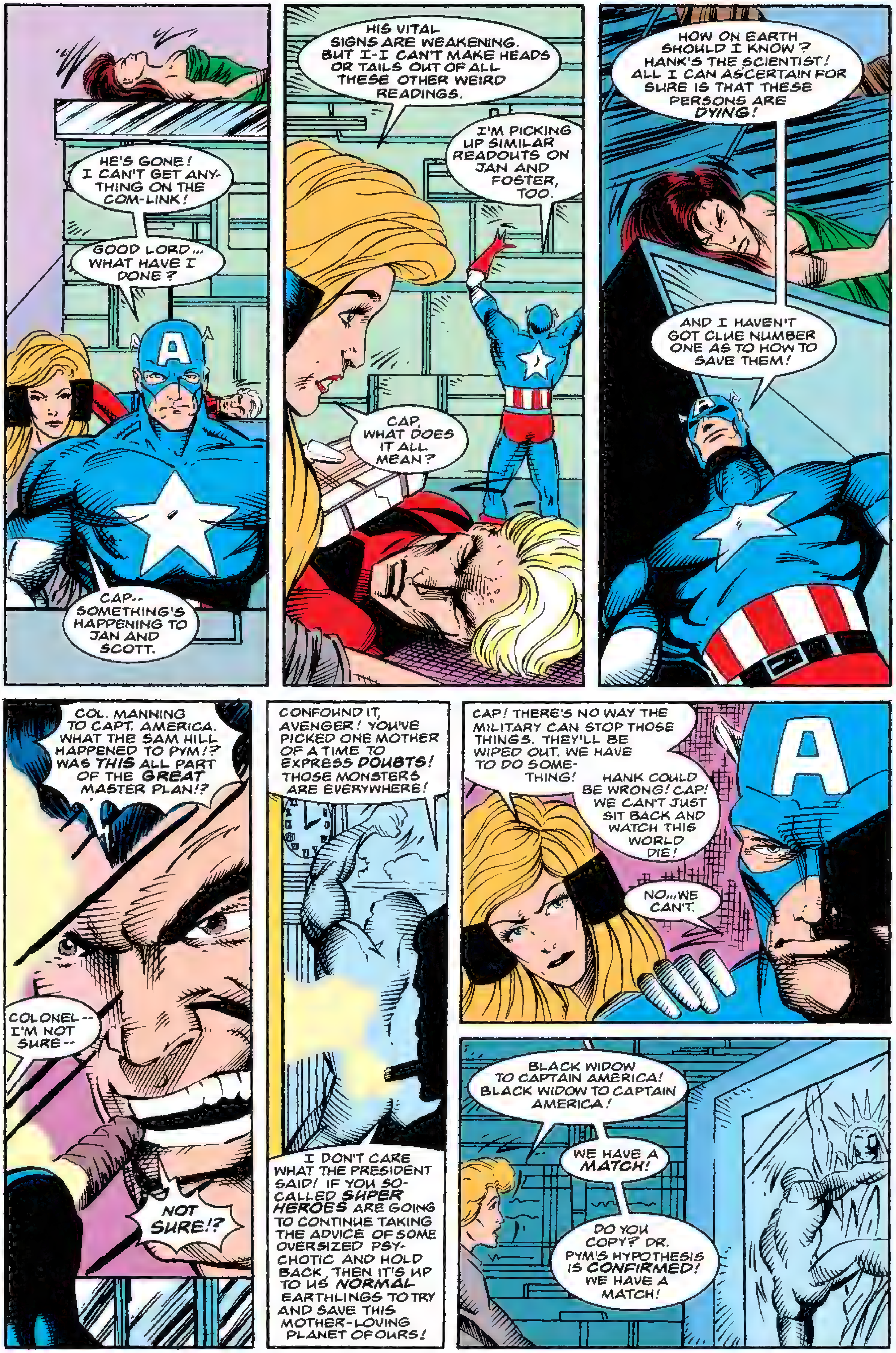

TIME FOR DESSERT!!
HHRRRAAAARRGG!!!
BY PELEL'S FURY! MY SHELL! YOU SHATTERED MY SHELL!!
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE!?
ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE, KOSMOSIAN, ONCE YOU'VE FOUND THE KEY.
YOU'VE VERIFIED ONE OF MY SUPPOSITIONS...

...NOW LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN VERIFY *ANOTHER!*
WOW! HOW'S ABOUT A HAWAIIAN PUNCH!?
HEY, THAT MONSTER'S FILLED WITH *FLUBBER!*
SURE! TALK ABOUT CRASHING LAS VEGAS!
HODGSON! IF YOU AND YOUR TWO CRONIES DON'T SHUT UP--
TAKE IT EASY, COL. MANNING. THEY'RE ONLY TRYING TO VENT SOME OF THEIR PENT-UP ANXIETIES.
THIS IS THE FIRST *HOPEFUL* SIGN WE'VE SEEN SINCE THOSE GIANT MUTATIONS FIRST STARTED TERRORIZING HUMANITY.

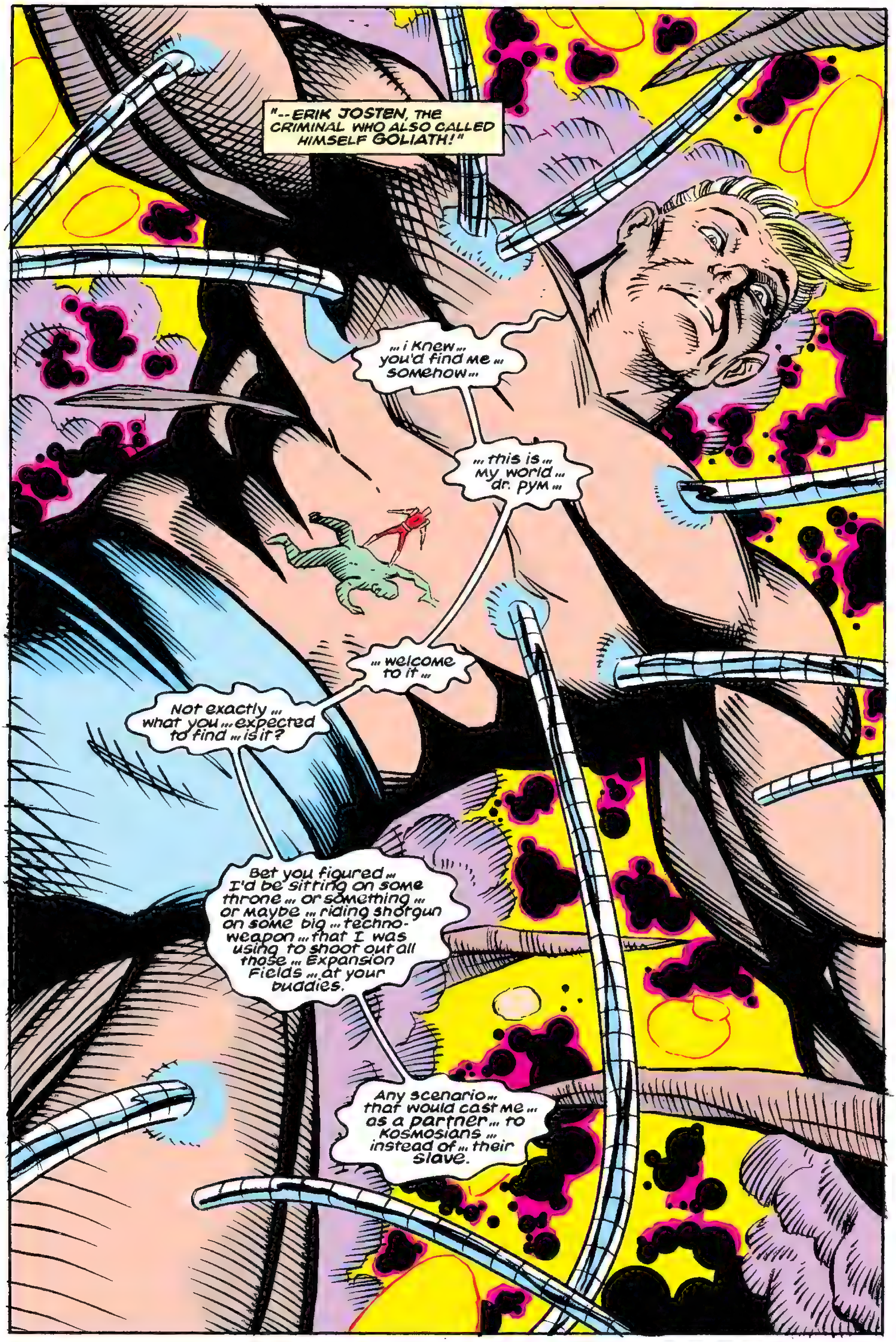

YOU CALL THAT HOPEFUL? THAT COSMOS-WHATEVER-YA-CALL-IT IS NOT EXACTLY AN EASY KILL. AND THIS IS ONLY ONE OF THEM. YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT GIANT-MAN ALONE WILL BE ABLE TO STOP ALL THOSE ALIENS?
ARROGANT, OVER-CONFIDENT FOOL! IT MATTERS NOT IN WHAT FORM WE DEAL OUT THIS PLANET'S DESTRUCTION. THE INEVITABLE CANNOT BE FORESTALLED.
AND IT IS YOU WHO SHALL EVER BE KNOWN AS THE CATALYST OF EARTH'S DESTRUCTION!
NO... NOT THIS TIME. MY DAYS OF PLAYING THE FOOL... ARE OVER.
WHAT'S GIANT-MAN DOING?
I'M NOT SURE, CRYSTAL... BUT IT LOOKS LIKE...

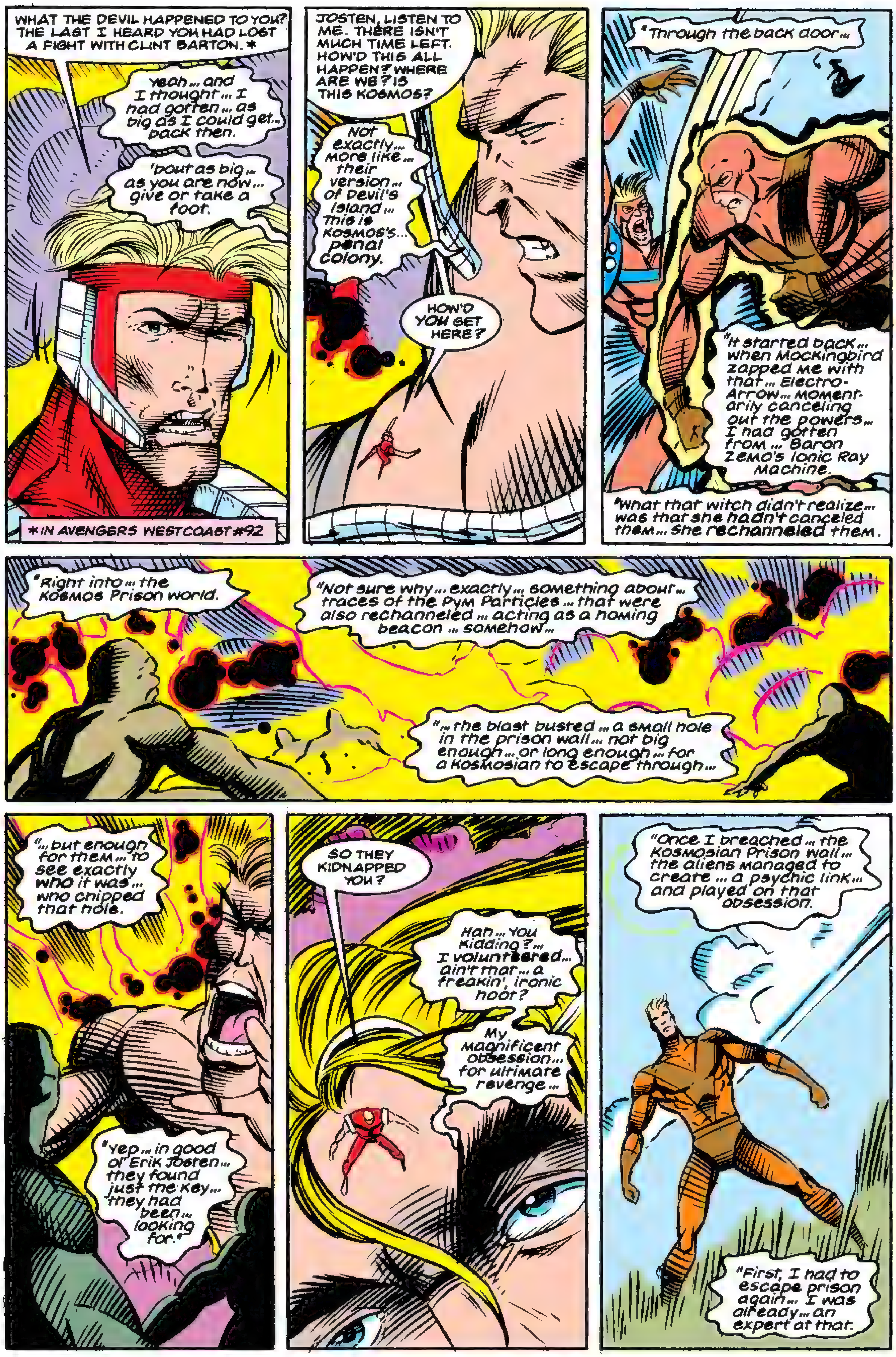

"... HE'S GROWING EVEN LARGER!"
"BUT HE'S OVER 60 FEET NOW! CAP, THERE'S NO WAY HIS BODY'S GOING TO SURVIVE THAT!"
UNNNNGGH!!
HHRRARR!
"THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE... HE'S ACTUALLY GETTING STRONGER WITH EVERY GROWTH SPURT. BUT, HANK HIMSELF TOLD US THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE!"
"BUT, CAP, REMEMBER WHAT HANK SAID TO THE KOSMOSIAN...
"... NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE-- ONCE YOU'VE FOUND THE KEY."
"WELL, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT, I'D SAY HE'S FOUND ONE HECK OF A BIG KEY!"

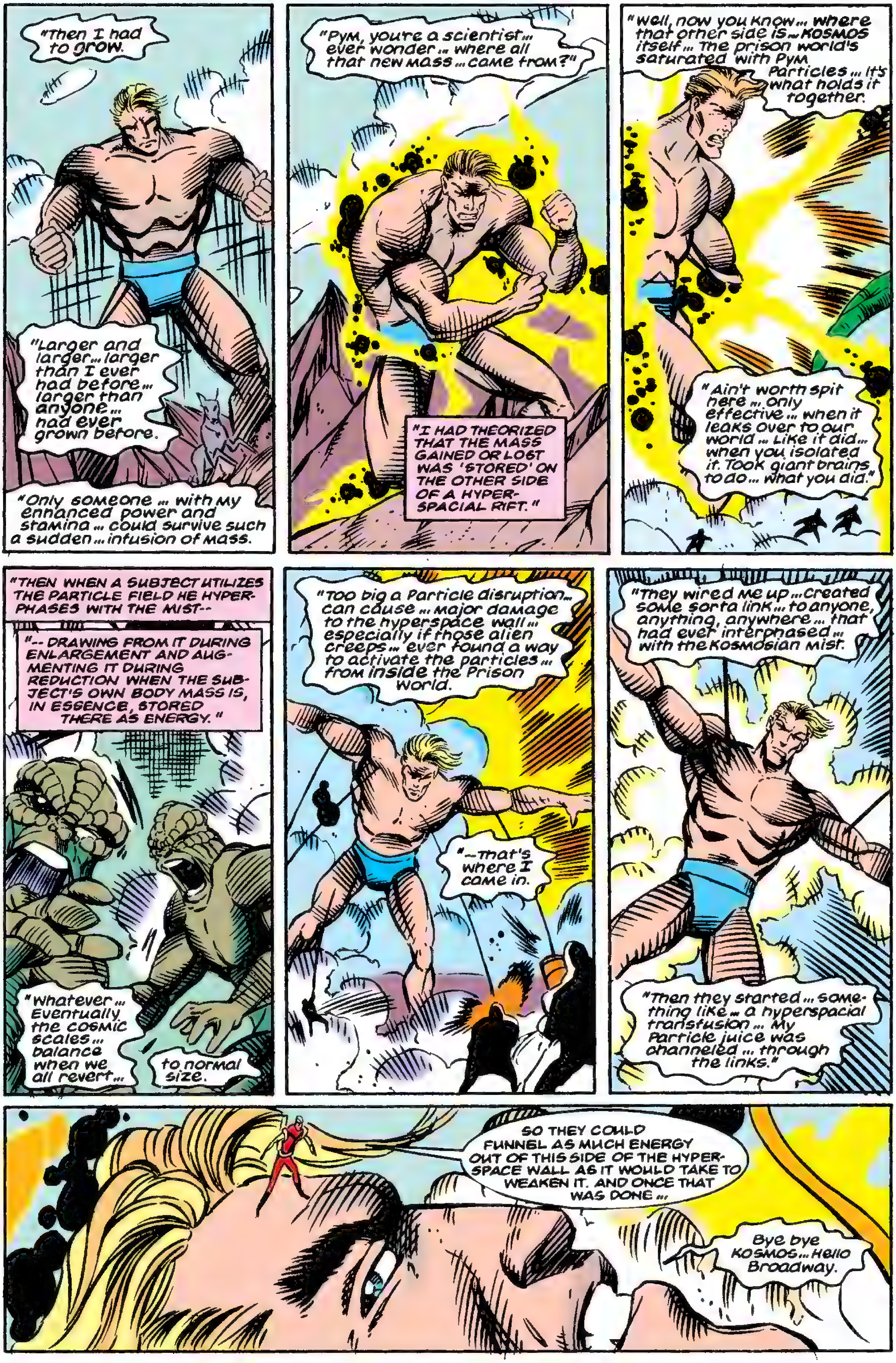

WOW! DID YA SEE THAT!? GIANT-MAN'S MAKIN' HAMBURGER MEAT OUTTA THAT MONSTER!
MAN, I AIN'T NEVER SEEN HIM THAT MAD BEFORE! IT'S LIKE IT WAS SOME KINDA PERSONAL GRUDGE MATCH OR SOMETHING.
I JUST WISH HE'D DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT SICKENING SMELL! IT'S GIVING ME THE HEEBIE-JEEBIES.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, KOSMOSIAN? NOT USED TO FIGHTING AN ENEMY YOUR OWN SIZE!? NOT ACCUSTOMED TO SOMEONE WHO'S IMMUNE TO YOUR FEAR-INDUCING MISTS!? NASH'S ANTHROPODIC GENETIC MEMORY RECALLED IT FROM HIS ANCESTORS' EXPOSURE TO IT SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THAT'S WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO WARN ME ABOUT BEFORE THE PANIC TOTALLY OVERCAME HIM-- BEFORE I WAS FORCED TO KILL HIM.
THE MIST RETURNS-- THE MONSTERS IN THE MIST-- THE FORMIC ACID MIST!
YOU!
C'MON, YOU MIASMIC MASS OF VICIOUS MUSH--GET UP! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DIE ON ME YET! NOT UNTIL I'VE GOTTEN ALL THE ANSWERS!
KOLAI! PIREI! I AM IN DANGER! THE HUMAN PYM HAS DECIPHERED THE CODE!
OPEN THE PORTAL! OPEN THE PORTAL!!
THAT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE THE LIGHT I SEE WHENEVER LOCKJAW USES HIS TELEPORTATION FIELD. IT'S A RIP IN THE FABRIC OF SPACE ITSELF.
NO YOU DON'T! THIS BATTLE ENDS ONLY WHEN I SAY SO!
GIANT-MAN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
THE PORTAL'S BREAKING DOWN! LET GO OF THE KOSMOSIAN! YOU'RE GOING TO BE SUCKED IN WITH IT!
BLAST IT, AVENGER! LET IT GO!!
HANK!!

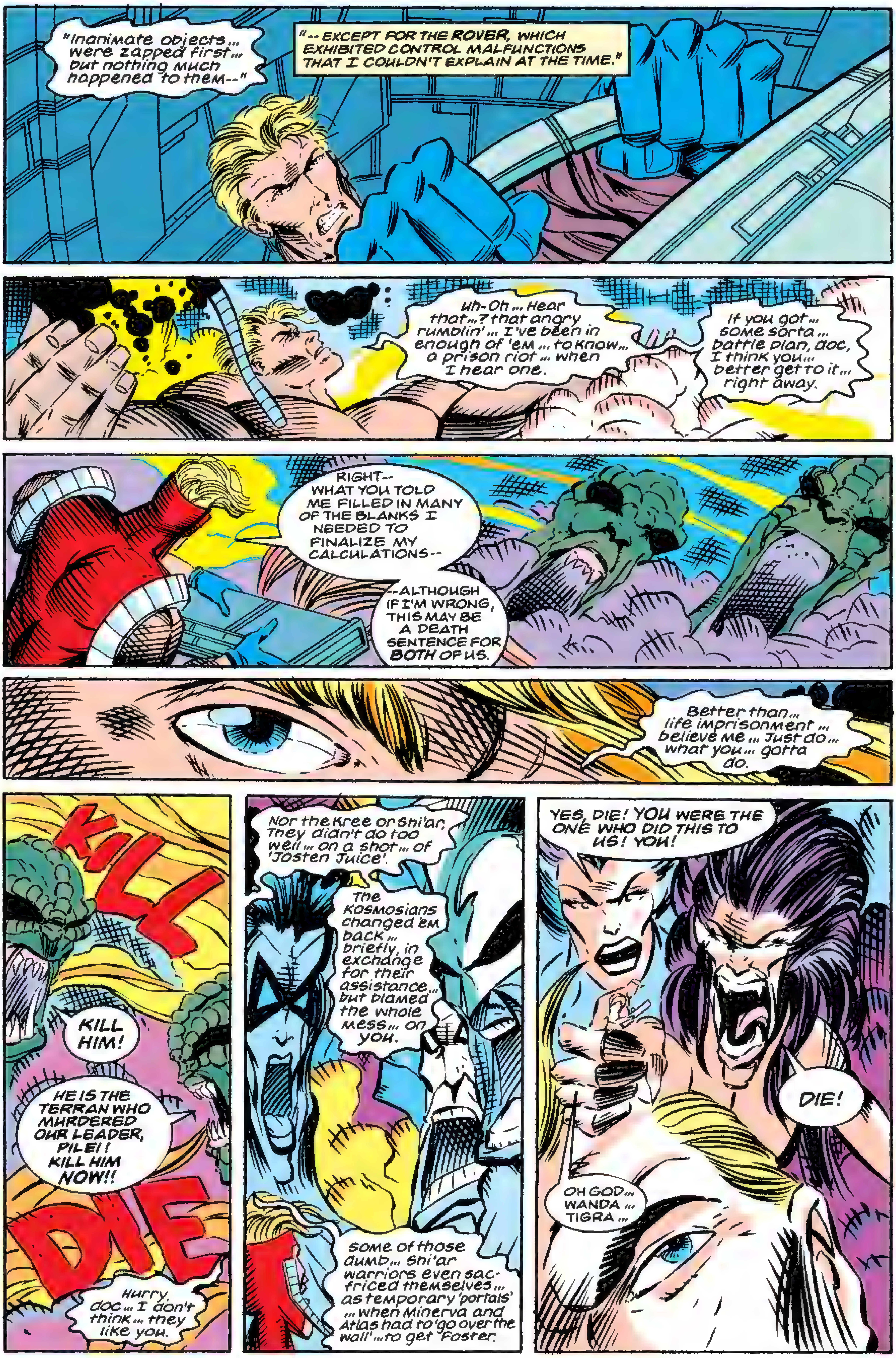

HE'S GONE! I CAN'T GET ANYTHING ON THE COM-LINK!
GOOD LORD... WHAT HAVE I DONE?
CAP-- SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO JAN AND SCOTT.
HIS VITAL SIGNS ARE WEAKENING. BUT I-I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OUT OF ALL THESE OTHER WEIRD READINGS.
I'M PICKING UP SIMILAR READOUTS ON JAN AND FOSTER, TOO.
CAP, WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?
HOW ON EARTH SHOULD I KNOW? HANK'S THE SCIENTIST! ALL I CAN ASCERTAIN FOR SURE IS THAT THESE PERSONS ARE **DYING!**
AND I HAVEN'T GOT CLUE NUMBER ONE AS TO HOW TO SAVE THEM!
COL. MANNING TO CAPT. AMERICA. WHAT THE SAM HILL HAPPENED TO PYM!? WAS **THIS** ALL PART OF THE **GREAT** MASTER PLAN!?
COLONEL-- I'M NOT SURE--
NOT SURE!?
CONFOUND IT, AVENGER! YOU'VE PICKED ONE MOTHER OF A TIME TO EXPRESS **DOUBTS!** THOSE MONSTERS ARE EVERYWHERE!
I DON'T CARE WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID! IF YOU SO-CALLED **SUPER HEROES** ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TAKING THE ADVICE OF SOME OVERSIZED PSYCHOTIC AND HOLD BACK, THEN IT'S UP TO US **NORMAL** EARTHLINGS TO TRY AND SAVE THIS MOTHER-LOVING PLANET OF OURS!
CAP! THERE'S NO WAY THE MILITARY CAN STOP THOSE THINGS. THEY'LL BE WIPED OUT. WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!
HANK COULD BE WRONG! CAP! WE CAN'T JUST SIT BACK AND WATCH THIS WORLD DIE!
NO... WE CAN'T.
BLACK WIDOW TO CAPTAIN AMERICA! BLACK WIDOW TO CAPTAIN AMERICA!
WE HAVE A **MATCH!**
DO YOU COPY? DR. PYM'S HYPOTHESIS IS **CONFIRMED!** WE HAVE A MATCH!

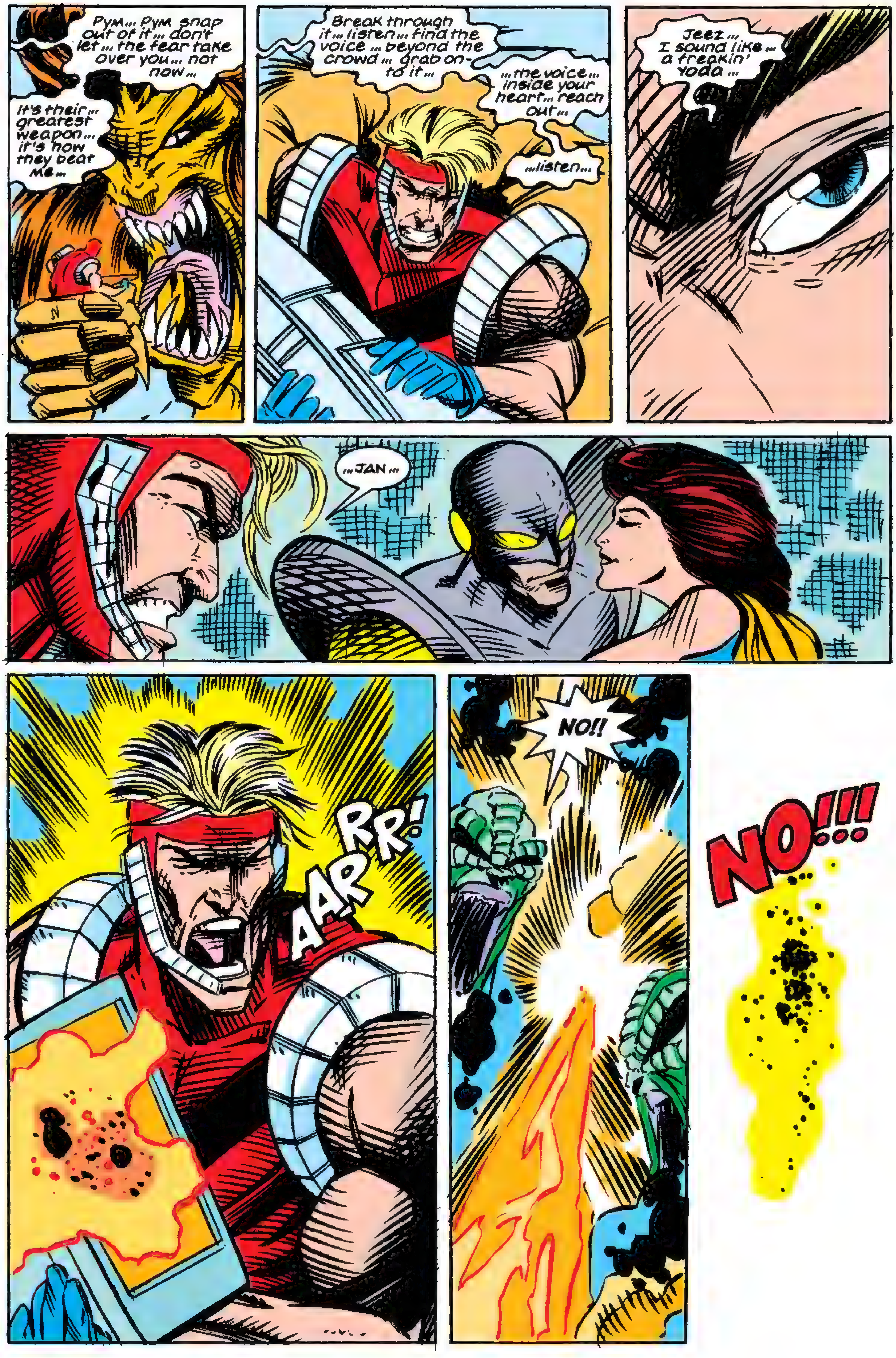
"NATASHA, ARE YOU POSITIVE? THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO POSSIBILITY OF ERROR?"
"THE PROGRAM'S BEEN RUN THROUGH THREE TIMES, CAP.
"COMPUTER CONFIRMS THAT THE SAME VARIANT STRAIN OF PYM PARTICLE IS PRESENT IN ALL THE DIAGNOSED SUBJECTS.
"IT FURTHER CONFIRMS THAT THE SOURCE OF THAT VARIANT DID NOT ORIGINATE FROM EITHER THE B.I.G. EXPERIMENT OR HANK'S ORIGINAL PARTICLE MATRIX.
"WE CROSS MATCHED THE AVENGERS' CRIMINAL DIAGNOSTIC RECORDS WITH ALL THIS DATA AND VERIFIED HANK'S DIAGNOSIS."
hi there... doctor... pym...
...you always were... smarter... than you gave yourself... credit for...
my god.
"I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT, BUT THE SOURCE OF ALL THESE GIANT MUTATIONS IS--

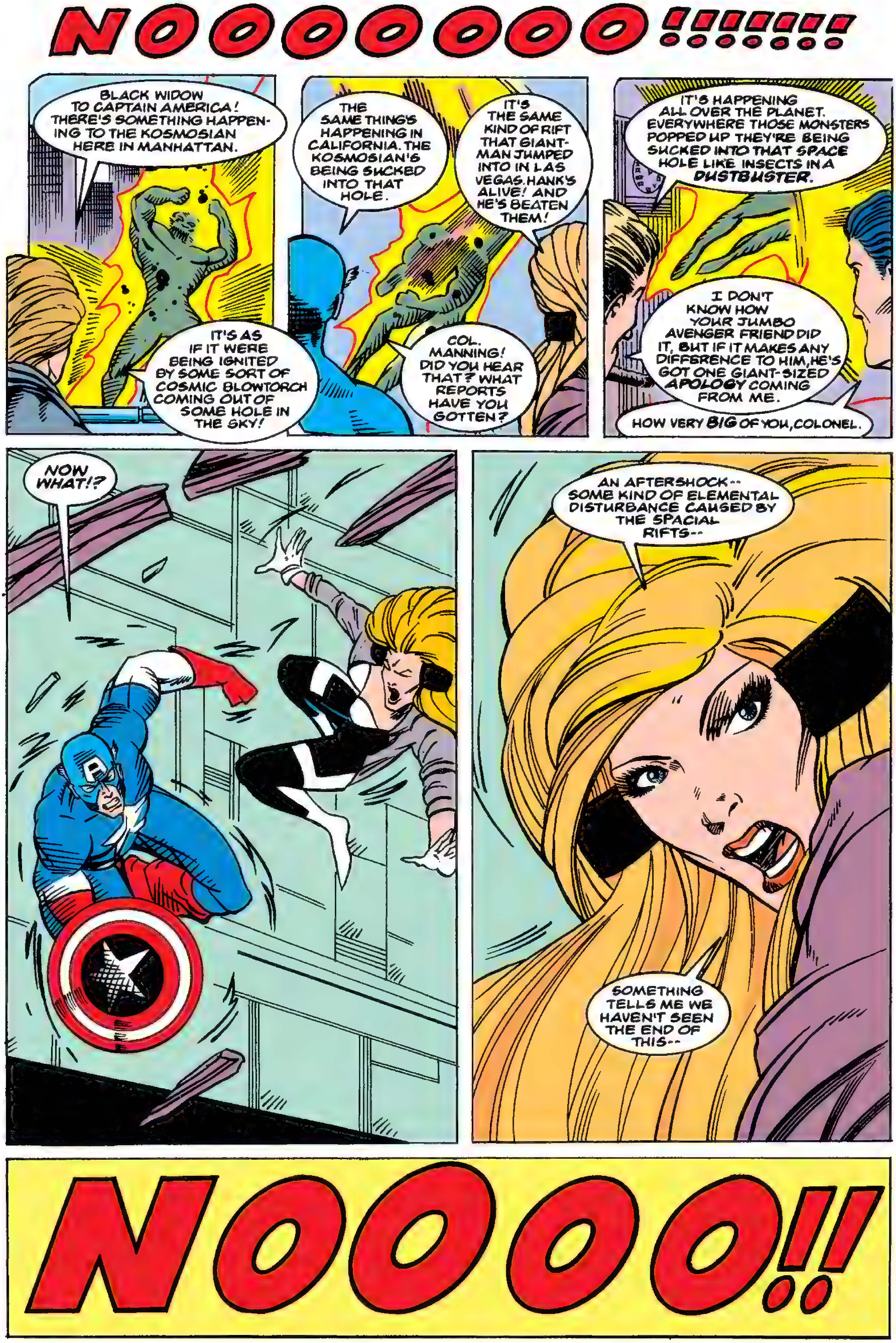

"--ERIK JOSTEN, THE CRIMINAL WHO ALSO CALLED HIMSELF GOLIATH!"
...i knew... you'd find me... somehow...
...this is... my world... dr. pym...
...welcome to it...
Not exactly... what you...expected to find...is it?
Bet you figured... I'd be sitting on some throne... or something... or maybe... riding shotgun on some big... techno-weapon... that I was using to shoot out all those... Expansion Fields... at your buddies.
Any scenario... that would cast me... as a partner... to Kosmosians... instead of... their slave.

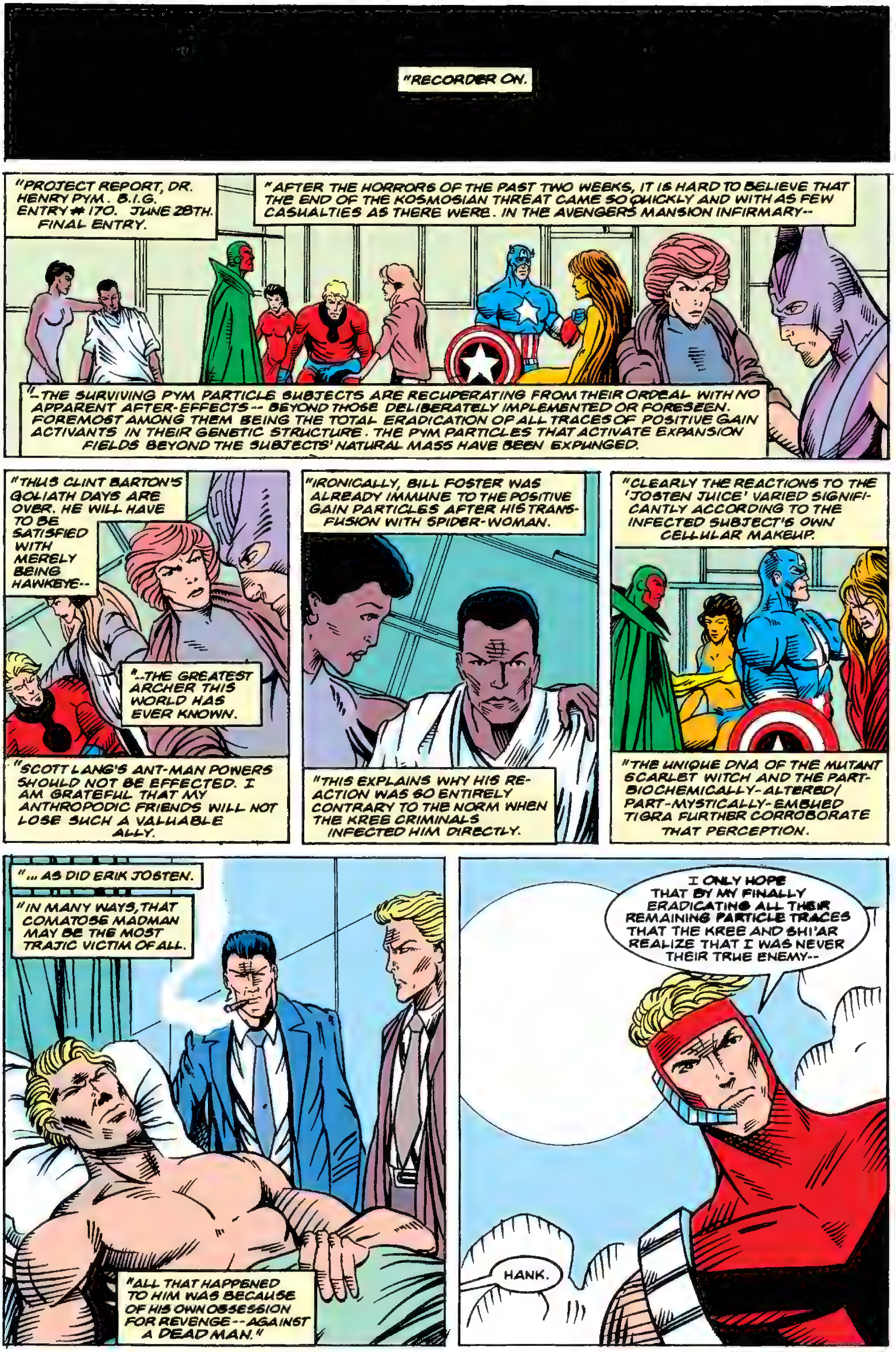

WHAT THE DEVIL HAPPENED TO YOU? THE LAST I HEARD YOU HAD LOST A FIGHT WITH CLINT BARTON.*
Yeah... and I thought... I had gotten... as big as I could get... back then.
'bout as big... as you are now... give or take a foot.
*IN AVENGERS WEST COAST #92
JOSTEN, LISTEN TO ME. THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME LEFT. HOW'D THIS ALL HAPPEN? WHERE ARE WE? IS THIS KOSMOS?
Not exactly... more like... their version... of Devil's Island... This is Kosmos's... penal colony.
HOW'D YOU GET HERE?
"Through the back door...
"It started back... when Mockingbird zapped me with that... Electro-Arrow... momentarily canceling out the powers... I had gotten from... Baron Zemo's Ionic Ray Machine.
"What that witch didn't realize... was that she hadn't canceled them... she rechanneled them.
"Right into... the Kosmos Prison world.
"Not sure why... exactly... something about... traces of the Pym Particles... that were also rechanneled... acting as a homing beacon... somehow...
"...the blast busted... a small hole in the prison wall... not big enough... or long enough... for a Kosmosian to escape through...
"...but enough for them... to see exactly who it was... who chipped that hole.
"Yep... in good ol' Erik Josten... they found just the key... they had been... looking for."
SO THEY KIDNAPPED YOU?
Hah... you kidding?... I volunteered... ain't that... a freakin', ironic hoot?
My magnificent obsession... for ultimate revenge...
"Once I breached... the Kosmosian Prison wall... the aliens managed to create... a psychic link... and played on that obsession.
"First, I had to escape prison again... I was already... an expert at that.

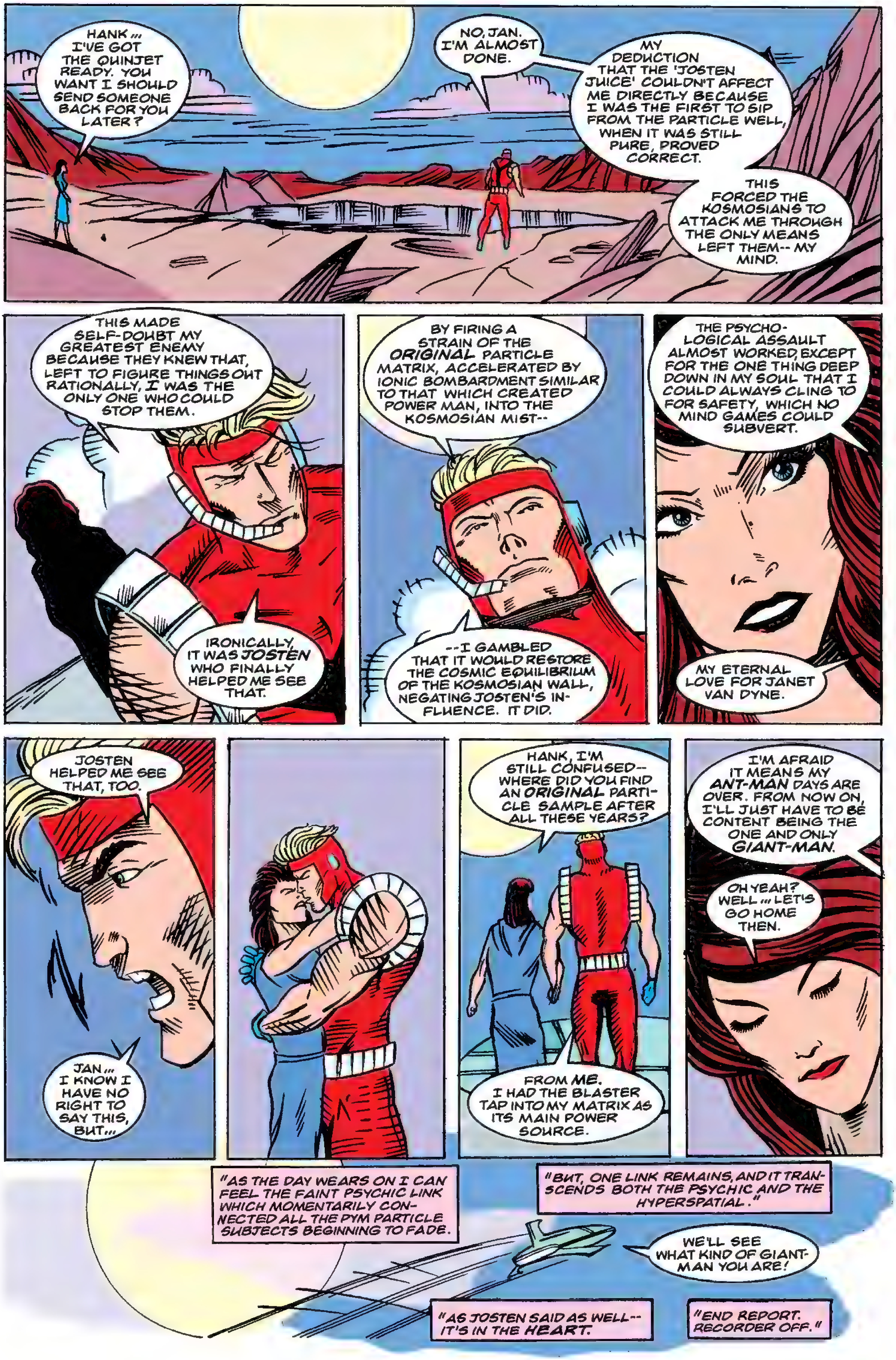

"Then I had to grow.
"Larger and larger... larger than I ever had before... larger than anyone... had ever grown before.
"Only someone... with my enhanced power and stamina... could survive such a sudden... infusion of mass.
"Pym, you're a scientist... ever wonder... where all that new mass... came from?"
"I HAD THEORIZED THAT THE MASS GAINED OR LOST WAS 'STORED' ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A HYPER-SPACIAL RIFT."
"Well, now you know... where that other side is... KOSMOS itself... the prison world's saturated with Pym Particles... it's what holds it together.
"Ain't worth spit here... only effective... when it leaks over to our world... like it did... when you isolated it. Took giant brains to do... what you did."
"THEN WHEN A SUBJECT UTILIZES THE PARTICLE FIELD HE HYPER-PHASES WITH THE MIST--
"-- DRAWING FROM IT DURING ENLARGEMENT AND AUGMENTING IT DURING REDUCTION WHEN THE SUBJECT'S OWN BODY MASS IS, IN ESSENCE, STORED THERE AS ENERGY."
"Whatever... Eventually the cosmic scales... balance when we all revert...
to normal size.
"Too big a particle disruption... can cause... major damage to the hyperspace wall... especially if those alien creeps... ever found a way to activate the particles... from inside the Prison World.
"--That's where I came in.
"They wired me up... created some sorta link... to anyone, anything, anywhere... that had ever interphased... with the Kosmosian mist.
"Then they started... something like... a hyperspacial transfusion... my particle juice was channeled... through the links."
SO THEY COULD FUNNEL AS MUCH ENERGY OUT OF THIS SIDE OF THE HYPER-SPACE WALL AS IT WOULD TAKE TO WEAKEN IT. AND ONCE THAT WAS DONE...
Bye bye KOSMOS... Hello Broadway.


"Inanimate objects... were zapped first... but nothing much happened to them--"
"--EXCEPT FOR THE ROVER, WHICH EXHIBITED CONTROL MALFUNCTIONS THAT I COULDN'T EXPLAIN AT THE TIME."
Uh-Oh... Hear that...? that angry rumblin'... I've been in enough of 'em... to know... a prison riot... when I hear one.
If you got... some sorta... battle plan, doc, I think you... better get to it... right away.
RIGHT-- WHAT YOU TOLD ME FILLED IN MANY OF THE BLANKS I NEEDED TO FINALIZE MY CALCULATIONS--
--ALTHOUGH IF I'M WRONG, THIS MAY BE A DEATH SENTENCE FOR BOTH OF US.
Better than... life imprisonment... believe me... Just do... what you... gotta do.
KILL
KILL HIM!
HE IS THE TERRAN WHO MURDERED OUR LEADER, PILEI! KILL HIM NOW!!
DIE
Hurry, doc... I don't think... they like you.
Nor the Kree or Shi'ar. They didn't do too well... on a shot... of 'Josten Juice'.
The Kosmosians changed 'em back... briefly, in exchange for their assistance... but blamed the whole mess... on you.
Some of those dumb... Shi'ar warriors even sacrificed themselves... as temporary 'portals' ...when Minerva and Atlas had to 'go over the wall'... to get Foster.
YES, DIE! YOU WERE THE ONE WHO DID THIS TO US! YOU!
DIE!
OH GOD... WANDA... TIGRA...

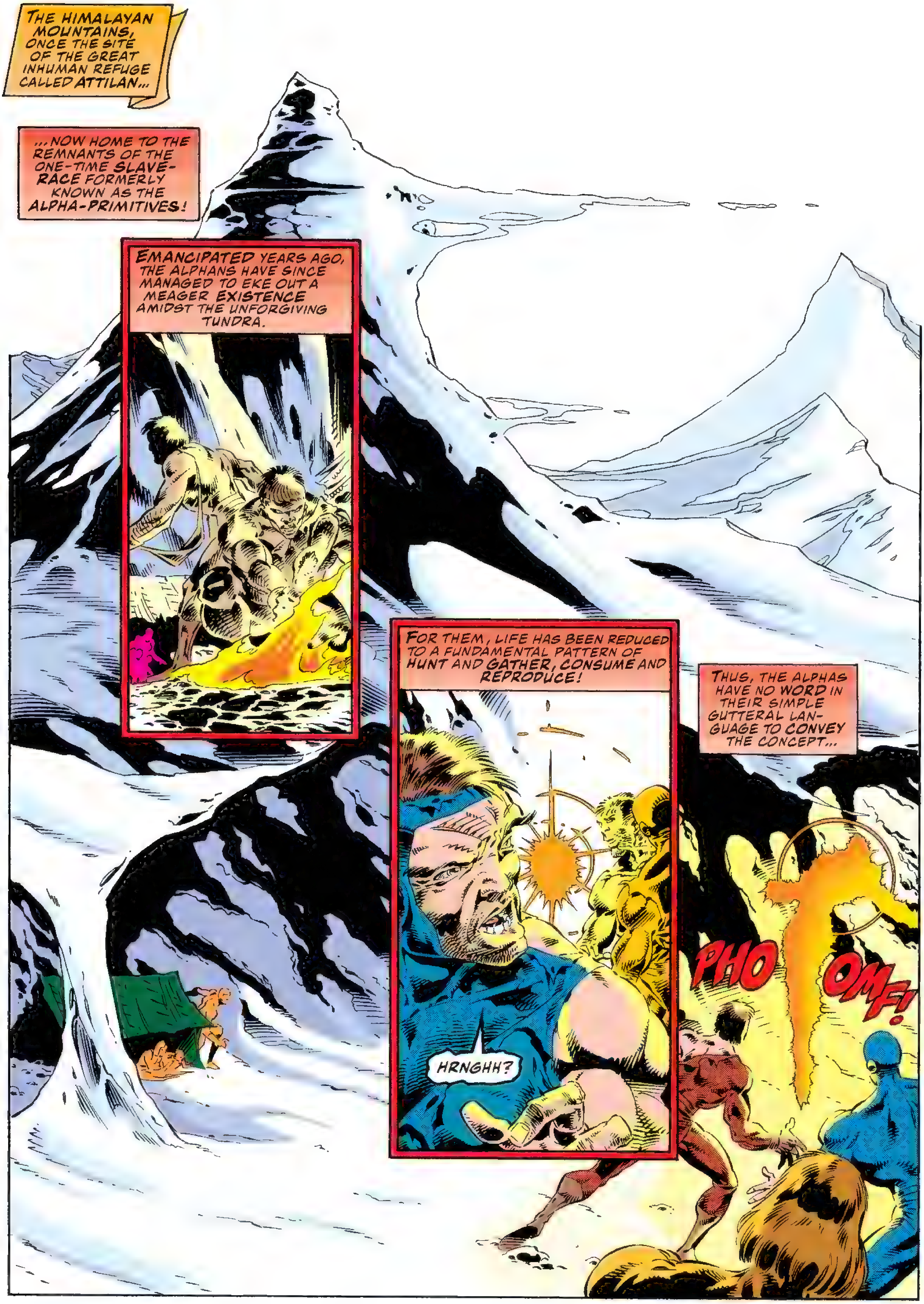

Pym... Pym snap out of it... don't let... the fear take over you... not now...
It's their... greatest weapon... it's how they beat me...
Break through it... listen... find the voice... beyond the crowd... grab onto it...
...the voice... inside your heart... reach out...
...listen...
Jeez... I sound like... a freakin' Yoda...
...JAN...
AARRR!
NO!!
NO!!!

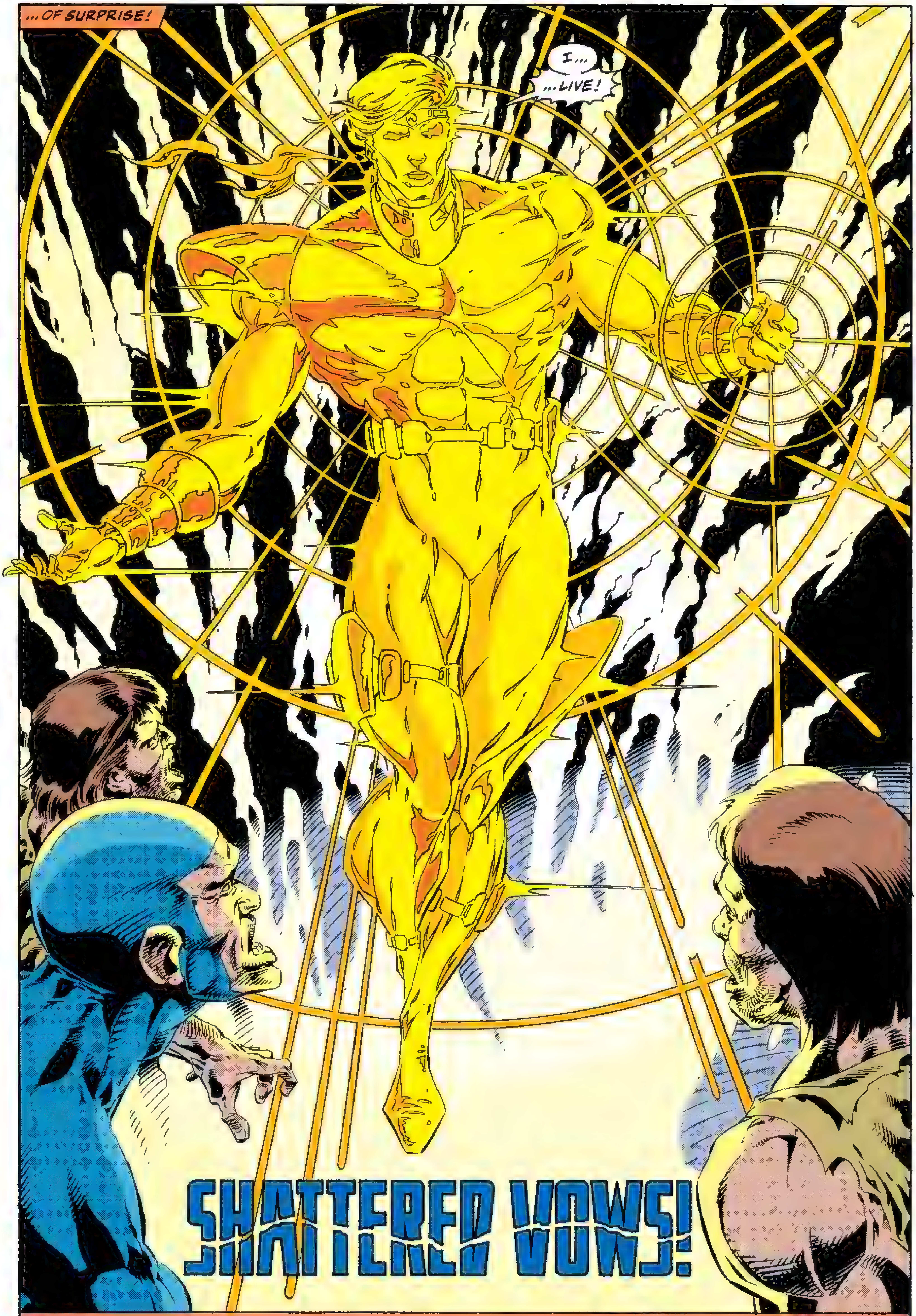

NOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!
BLACK WIDOW TO CAPTAIN AMERICA! THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING TO THE KOSMOSIAN HERE IN MANHATTAN.
IT'S AS IF IT WERE BEING IGNITED BY SOME SORT OF COSMIC BLOWTORCH COMING OUT OF SOME HOLE IN THE SKY!
THE SAME THING'S HAPPENING IN CALIFORNIA. THE KOSMOSIAN'S BEING SUCKED INTO THAT HOLE.
IT'S THE SAME KIND OF RIFT THAT GIANT-MAN JUMPED INTO IN LAS VEGAS. HANK'S ALIVE! AND HE'S BEATEN THEM!
COL. MANNING! DID YOU HEAR THAT? WHAT REPORTS HAVE YOU GOTTEN?
IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER THE PLANET. EVERYWHERE THOSE MONSTERS POPPED UP THEY'RE BEING SUCKED INTO THAT SPACE HOLE LIKE INSECTS IN A DUSTBUSTER.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOUR JUMBO AVENGER FRIEND DID IT, BUT IF IT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE TO HIM, HE'S GOT ONE GIANT-SIZED APOLOGY COMING FROM ME.
HOW VERY BIG OF YOU, COLONEL.
NOW WHAT!?
AN AFTERSHOCK-- SOME KIND OF ELEMENTAL DISTURBANCE CAUSED BY THE SPACIAL RIFTS--
SOMETHING TELLS ME WE HAVEN'T SEEN THE END OF THIS--
NOOOO!!


"RECORDER ON.
"PROJECT REPORT, DR. HENRY PYM. B.I.G. ENTRY # 170. JUNE 28TH. FINAL ENTRY.
"AFTER THE HORRORS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THE END OF THE KOSMOSIAN THREAT CAME SO QUICKLY AND WITH AS FEW CASUALTIES AS THERE WERE. IN THE AVENGERS MANSION INFIRMARY--
"--THE SURVIVING PYM PARTICLE SUBJECTS ARE RECUPERATING FROM THEIR ORDEAL WITH NO APPARENT AFTER-EFFECTS-- BEYOND THOSE DELIBERATELY IMPLEMENTED OR FORESEEN. FOREMOST AMONG THEM BEING THE TOTAL ERADICATION OF ALL TRACES OF POSITIVE GAIN ACTIVANTS IN THEIR GENETIC STRUCTURE. THE PYM PARTICLES THAT ACTIVATE EXPANSION FIELDS BEYOND THE SUBJECTS' NATURAL MASS HAVE BEEN EXPUNGED.
"THUS CLINT BARTON'S GOLIATH DAYS ARE OVER. HE WILL HAVE TO BE SATISFIED WITH MERELY BEING HAWKEYE--
"--THE GREATEST ARCHER THIS WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN.
"SCOTT LANG'S ANT-MAN POWERS SHOULD NOT BE EFFECTED. I AM GRATEFUL THAT MY ANTHROPODIC FRIENDS WILL NOT LOSE SUCH A VALUABLE ALLY.
"IRONICALLY, BILL FOSTER WAS ALREADY IMMUNE TO THE POSITIVE GAIN PARTICLES AFTER HIS TRANSFUSION WITH SPIDER-WOMAN.
"THIS EXPLAINS WHY HIS REACTION WAS SO ENTIRELY CONTRARY TO THE NORM WHEN THE KREE CRIMINALS INFECTED HIM DIRECTLY.
"CLEARLY THE REACTIONS TO THE 'JOSTEN JUICE' VARIED SIGNIFICANTLY ACCORDING TO THE INFECTED SUBJECT'S OWN CELLULAR MAKEUP.
"THE UNIQUE DNA OF THE MUTANT SCARLET WITCH AND THE PART-BIOCHEMICALLY-ALTERED/PART-MYSTICALLY-EMBUED TIGRA FURTHER CORROBORATE THAT PERCEPTION.
"... AS DID ERIK JOSTEN.
"IN MANY WAYS, THAT COMATOSE MADMAN MAY BE THE MOST TRAJIC VICTIM OF ALL.
"ALL THAT HAPPENED TO HIM WAS BECAUSE OF HIS OWN OBSESSION FOR REVENGE--AGAINST A DEAD MAN."
I ONLY HOPE THAT BY MY FINALLY ERADICATING ALL THEIR REMAINING PARTICLE TRACES THAT THE KREE AND SHI'AR REALIZE THAT I WAS NEVER THEIR TRUE ENEMY--
HANK.


HANK... I'VE GOT THE QUINJET READY. YOU WANT I SHOULD SEND SOMEONE BACK FOR YOU LATER?
NO, JAN. I'M ALMOST DONE.
MY DEDUCTION THAT THE 'JOSTEN JUICE' COULDN'T AFFECT ME DIRECTLY BECAUSE I WAS THE FIRST TO SIP FROM THE PARTICLE WELL, WHEN IT WAS STILL PURE, PROVED CORRECT.
THIS FORCED THE KOSMOSIANS TO ATTACK ME THROUGH THE ONLY MEANS LEFT THEM-- MY MIND.
THIS MADE SELF-DOUBT MY GREATEST ENEMY BECAUSE THEY KNEW THAT, LEFT TO FIGURE THINGS OUT RATIONALLY, I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD STOP THEM.
IRONICALLY, IT WAS JOSTEN WHO FINALLY HELPED ME SEE THAT.
BY FIRING A STRAIN OF THE ORIGINAL PARTICLE MATRIX, ACCELERATED BY IONIC BOMBARDMENT SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH CREATED POWER MAN, INTO THE KOSMOSIAN MIST--
--I GAMBLED THAT IT WOULD RESTORE THE COSMIC EQUILIBRIUM OF THE KOSMOSIAN WALL, NEGATING JOSTEN'S INFLUENCE. IT DID.
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSAULT ALMOST WORKED, EXCEPT FOR THE ONE THING DEEP DOWN IN MY SOUL THAT I COULD ALWAYS CLING TO FOR SAFETY, WHICH NO MIND GAMES COULD SUBVERT.
MY ETERNAL LOVE FOR JANET VAN DYNE.
JOSTEN HELPED ME SEE THAT, TOO.
JAN... I KNOW I HAVE NO RIGHT TO SAY THIS, BUT...
HANK, I'M STILL CONFUSED-- WHERE DID YOU FIND AN ORIGINAL PARTICLE SAMPLE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?
FROM ME. I HAD THE BLASTER TAP INTO MY MATRIX AS ITS MAIN POWER SOURCE.
I'M AFRAID IT MEANS MY ANT-MAN DAYS ARE OVER. FROM NOW ON, I'LL JUST HAVE TO BE CONTENT BEING THE ONE AND ONLY GIANT-MAN.
OH YEAH? WELL... LET'S GO HOME THEN.
"AS THE DAY WEARS ON I CAN FEEL THE FAINT PSYCHIC LINK WHICH MOMENTARILY CONNECTED ALL THE PYM PARTICLE SUBJECTS BEGINNING TO FADE.
"BUT, ONE LINK REMAINS, AND IT TRANSCENDS BOTH THE PSYCHIC AND THE HYPERSPATIAL."
WE'LL SEE WHAT KIND OF GIANT-MAN YOU ARE!
"AS JOSTEN SAID AS WELL-- IT'S IN THE HEART.
"END REPORT. RECORDER OFF."

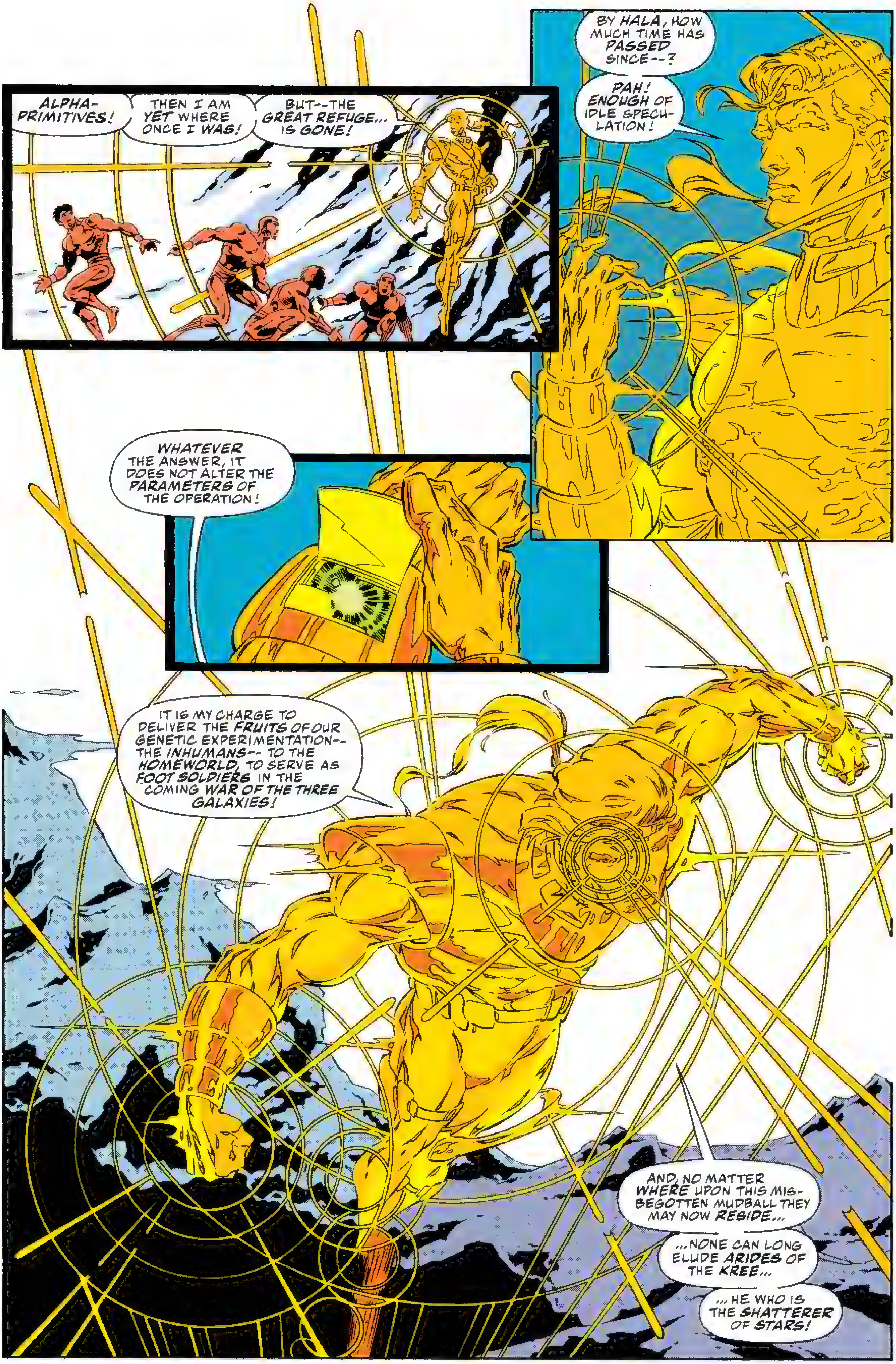
MARVEL COMICS
383
FEB '95
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
GUSTOVICH '94
FANTASTIC FORCE MAJEURE!

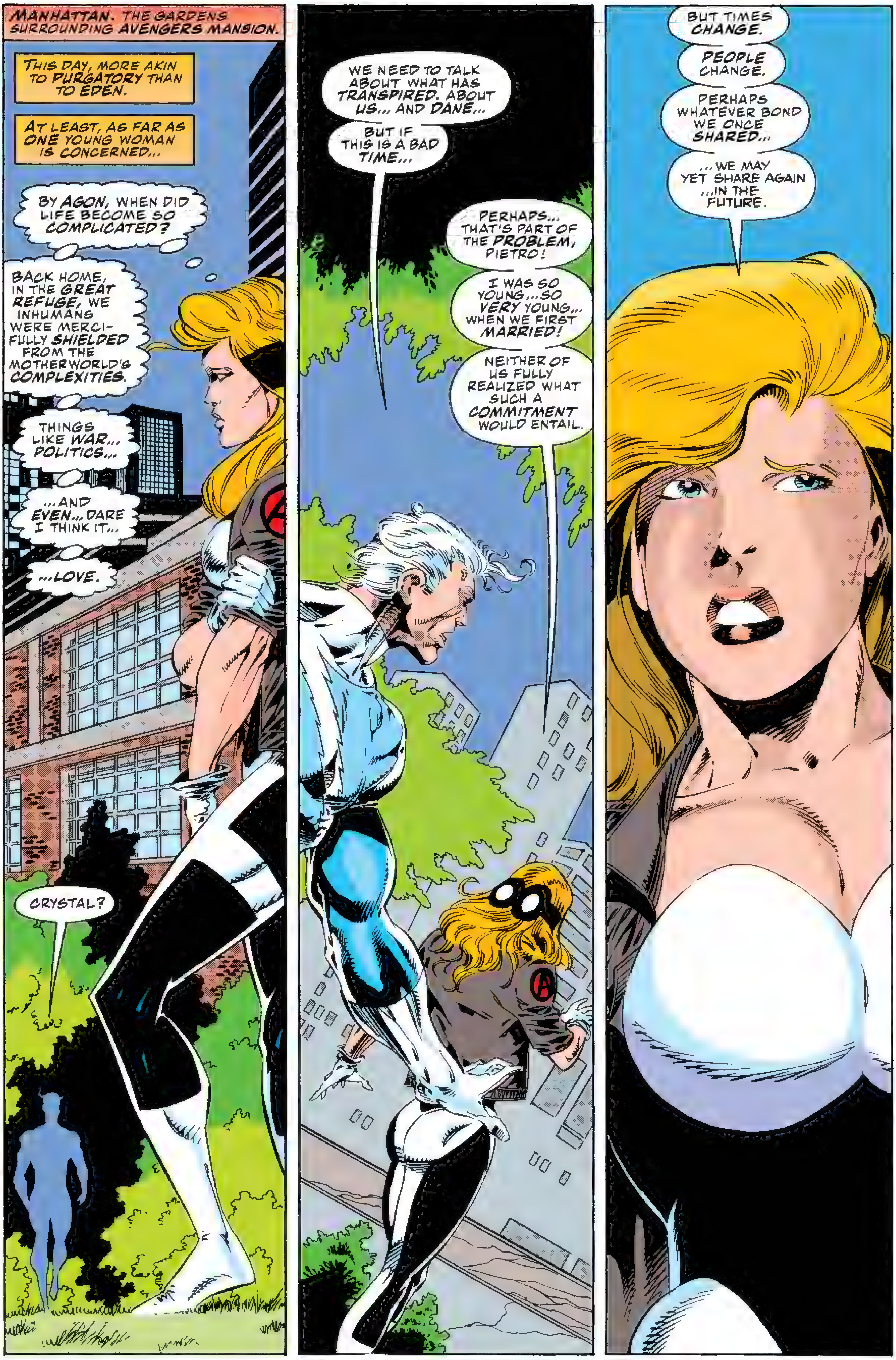

THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS, ONCE THE SITE OF THE GREAT INHUMAN REFUGE CALLED ATTILAN...
...NOW HOME TO THE REMNANTS OF THE ONE-TIME SLAVE-RACE FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE ALPHA-PRIMITIVES!
EMANCIPATED YEARS AGO, THE ALPHANS HAVE SINCE MANAGED TO EKE OUT A MEAGER EXISTENCE AMIDST THE UNFORGIVING TUNDRA.
FOR THEM, LIFE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO A FUNDAMENTAL PATTERN OF HUNT AND GATHER, CONSUME AND REPRODUCE!
HRNGHH?
THUS, THE ALPHAS HAVE NO WORD IN THEIR SIMPLE GUTTERAL LANGUAGE TO CONVEY THE CONCEPT...
PHOOMF!

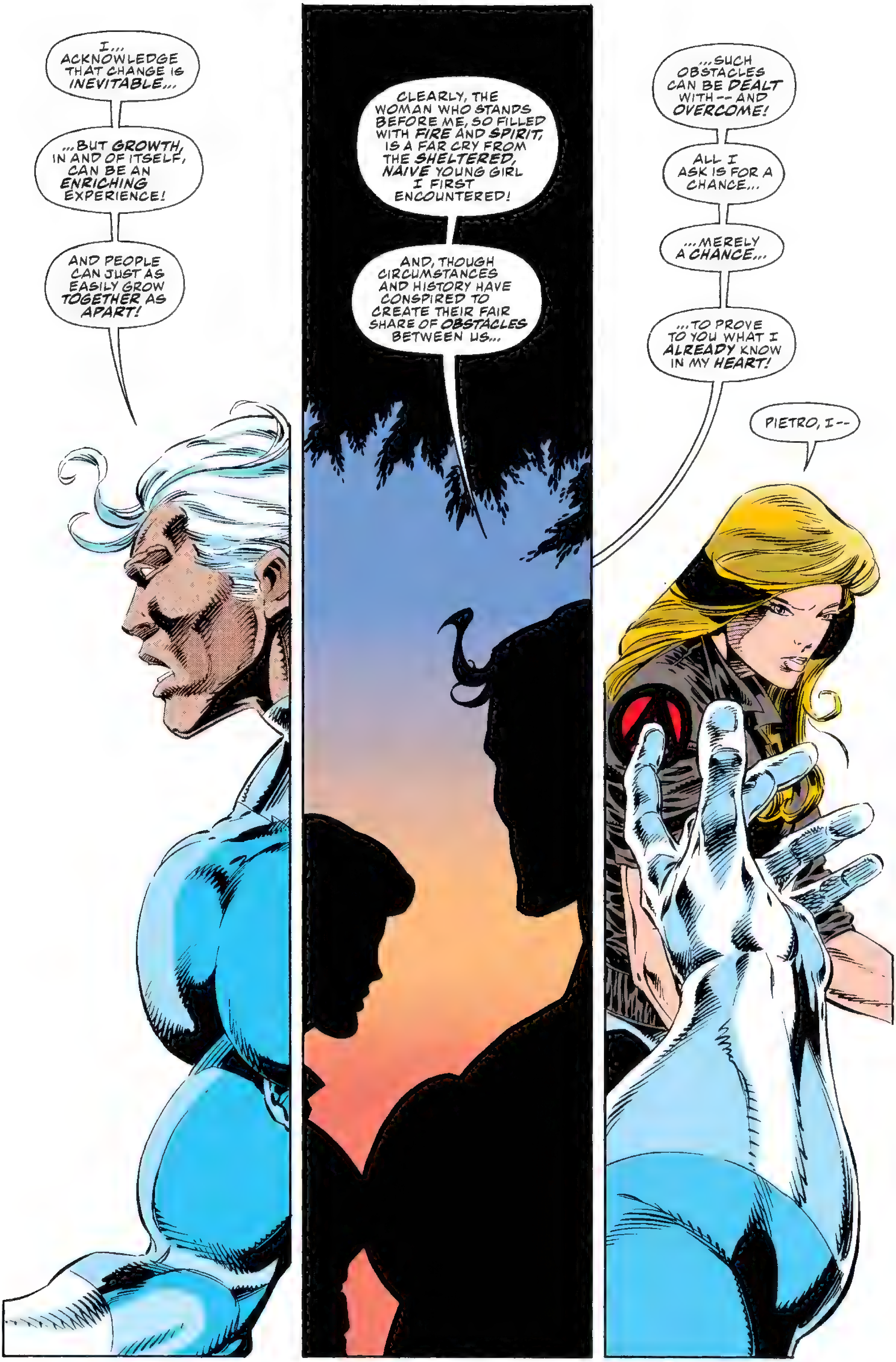

...OF SURPRISE!
I...
...LIVE!

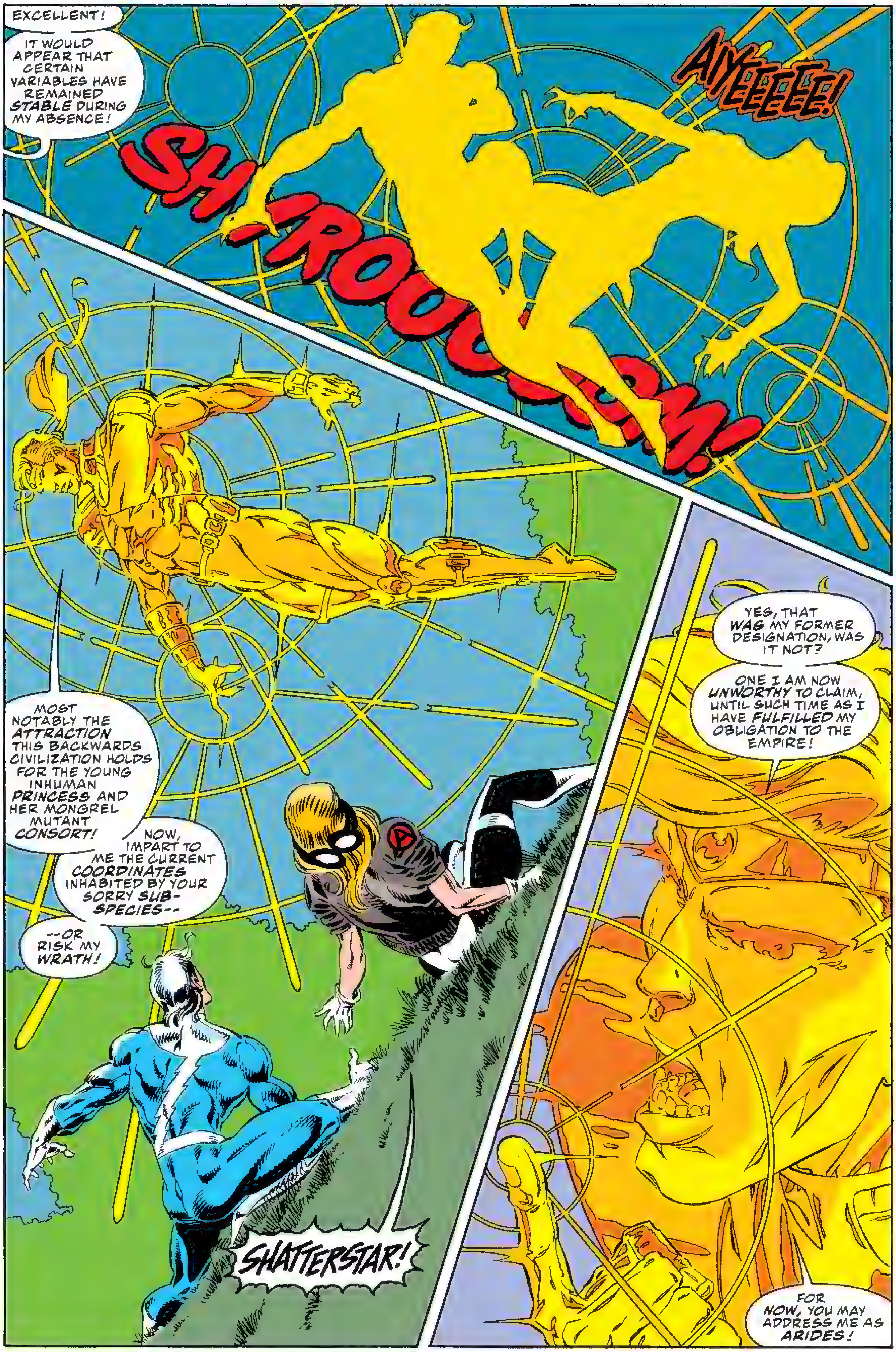
SHATTERED VOWS!

TOM BREVOORT & MIKE KANTEROVICH WRITERS • MIKE GUSTOVICH ARTIST • BILL OAKLEY LETTERER • KEVIN SOMERS & MARIE JAVINS COLORISTS • RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR • TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

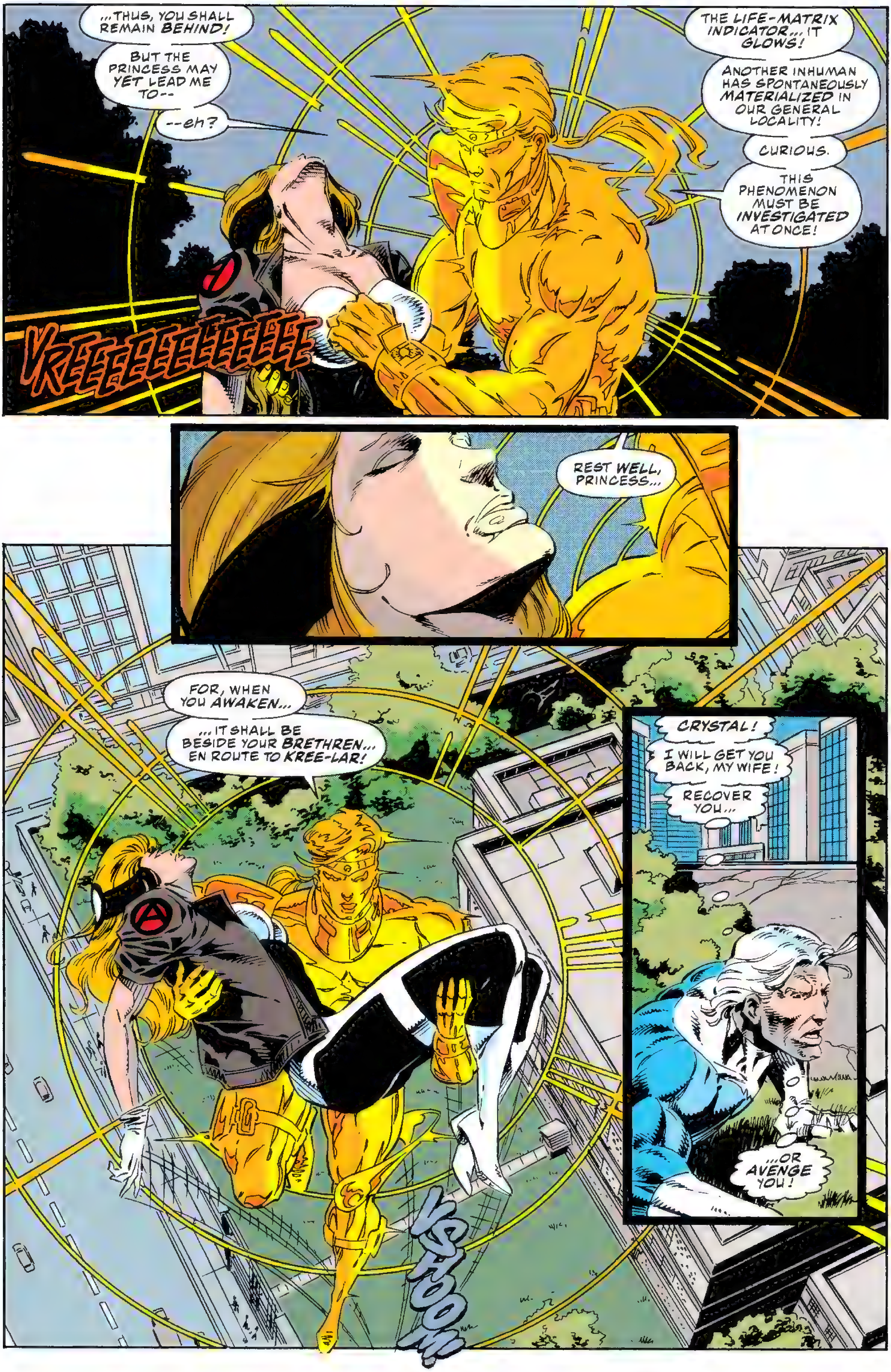

ALPHA-PRIMITIVES!
THEN I AM YET WHERE ONCE I WAS!
BUT--THE GREAT REFUGE... IS GONE!
BY HALA, HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE--?
PAH! ENOUGH OF IDLE SPECULATION!
WHATEVER THE ANSWER, IT DOES NOT ALTER THE PARAMETERS OF THE OPERATION!
IT IS MY CHARGE TO DELIVER THE FRUITS OF OUR GENETIC EXPERIMENTATION--THE INHUMANS-- TO THE HOMEWORLD, TO SERVE AS FOOT SOLDIERS IN THE COMING WAR OF THE THREE GALAXIES!
AND, NO MATTER WHERE UPON THIS MISBEGOTTEN MUDBALL THEY MAY NOW RESIDE...
...NONE CAN LONG ELUDE ARIDES OF THE KREE...
...HE WHO IS THE SHATTERER OF STARS!

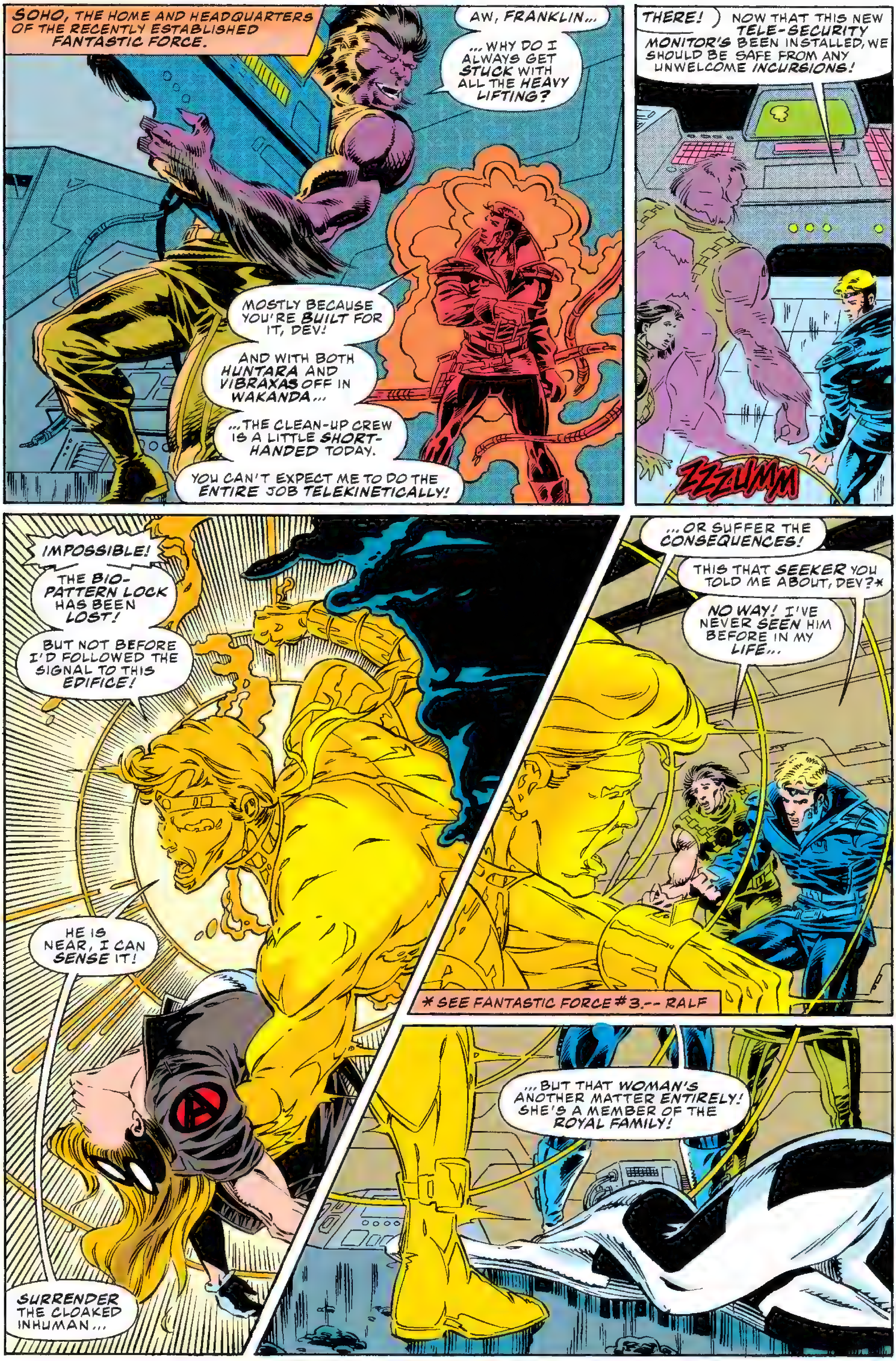

MANHATTAN. THE GARDENS SURROUNDING AVENGERS MANSION.
THIS DAY, MORE AKIN TO PURGATORY THAN TO EDEN.
AT LEAST, AS FAR AS ONE YOUNG WOMAN IS CONCERNED...
BY AGON, WHEN DID LIFE BECOME SO COMPLICATED?
BACK HOME, IN THE GREAT REFUGE, WE INHUMANS WERE MERCIFULLY SHIELDED FROM THE MOTHERWORLD'S COMPLEXITIES.
THINGS LIKE WAR... POLITICS...
...AND EVEN... DARE I THINK IT...
...LOVE.
CRYSTAL?
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED. ABOUT US... AND DANE...
BUT IF THIS IS A BAD TIME...
PERHAPS... THAT'S PART OF THE PROBLEM, PIETRO!
I WAS SO YOUNG... SO VERY YOUNG... WHEN WE FIRST MARRIED!
NEITHER OF US FULLY REALIZED WHAT SUCH A COMMITMENT WOULD ENTAIL.
BUT TIMES CHANGE.
PEOPLE CHANGE.
PERHAPS WHATEVER BOND WE ONCE SHARED...
...WE MAY YET SHARE AGAIN ...IN THE FUTURE.

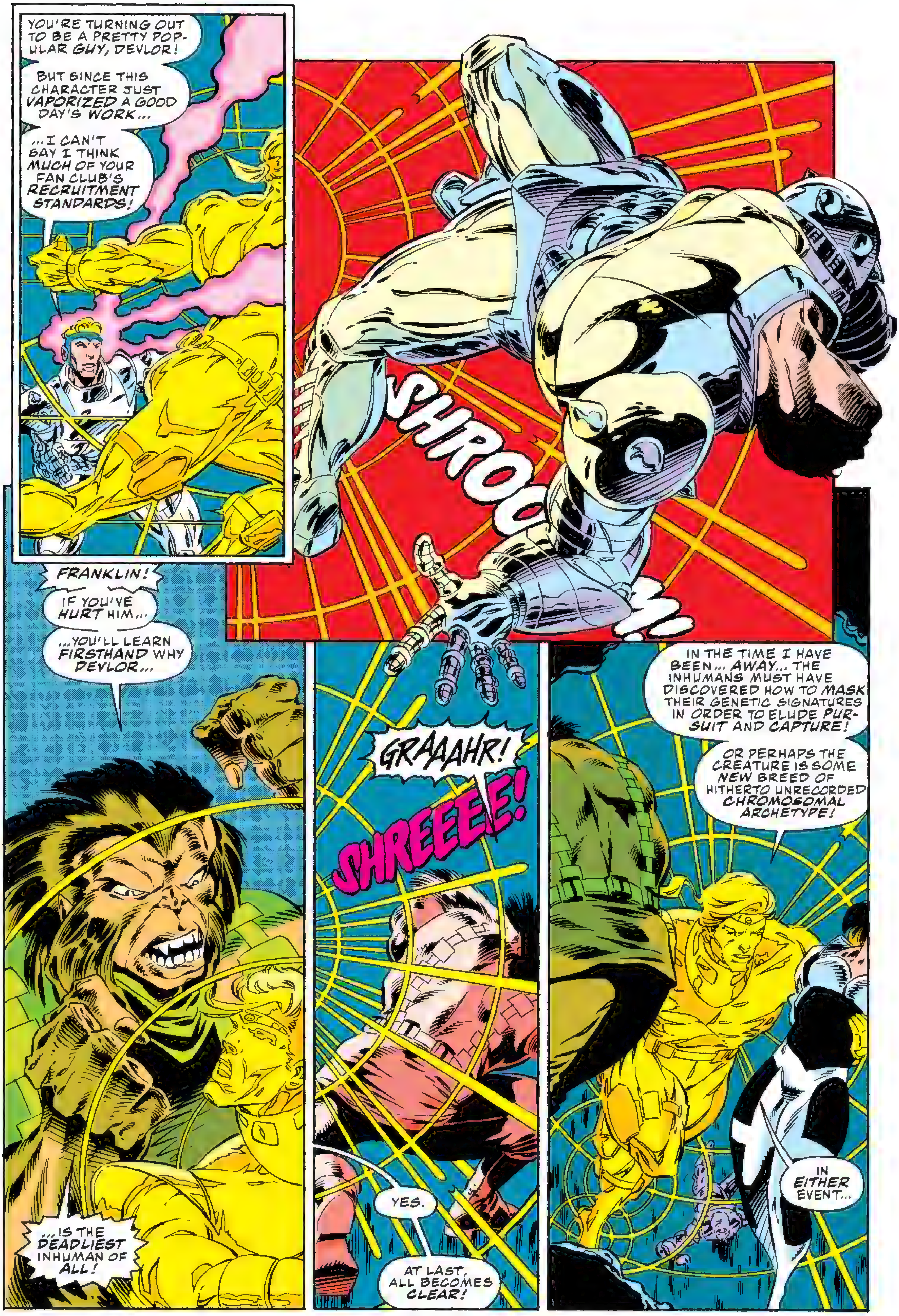

I... ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CHANGE IS *INEVITABLE*...
...BUT *GROWTH*, IN AND OF ITSELF, CAN BE AN *ENRICHING* EXPERIENCE!
AND PEOPLE CAN JUST AS EASILY GROW *TOGETHER* AS *APART!*
CLEARLY, THE WOMAN WHO STANDS BEFORE ME, SO FILLED WITH *FIRE* AND *SPIRIT*, IS A FAR CRY FROM THE *SHELTERED*, *NAIVE* YOUNG GIRL I FIRST ENCOUNTERED!
AND, THOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES AND HISTORY HAVE CONSPIRED TO CREATE THEIR FAIR SHARE OF *OBSTACLES* BETWEEN US...
...SUCH OBSTACLES CAN BE *DEALT* WITH -- AND *OVERCOME!*
ALL I ASK IS FOR A CHANCE...
...MERELY A *CHANCE*...
...TO PROVE TO YOU WHAT I *ALREADY* KNOW IN MY *HEART!*
PIETRO, I --

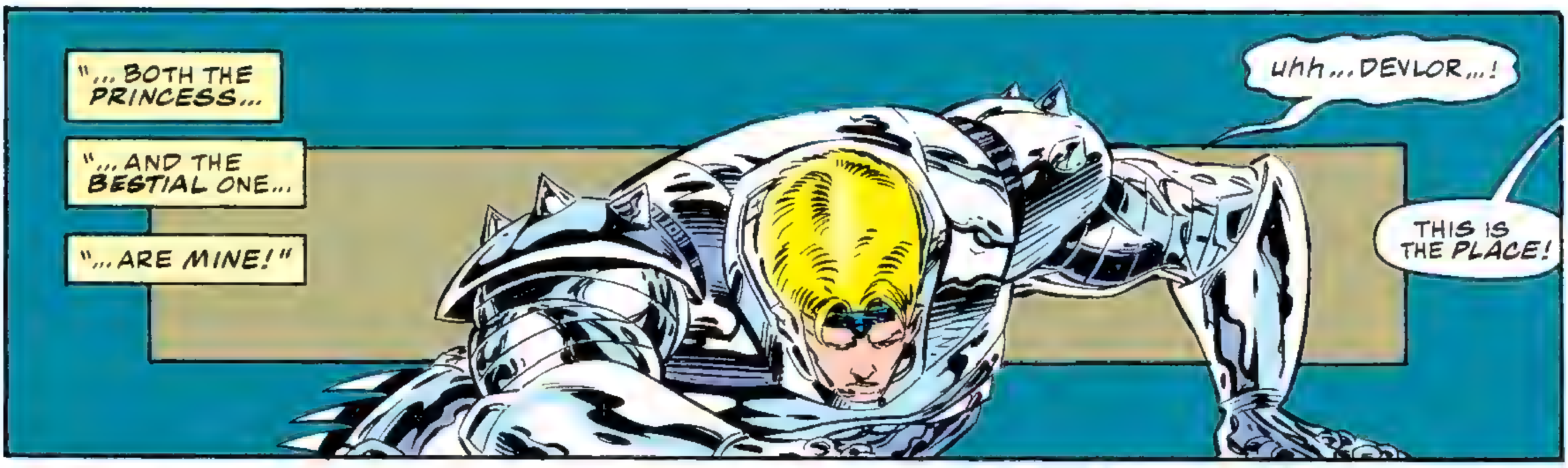

EXCELLENT!
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT CERTAIN VARIABLES HAVE REMAINED *STABLE* DURING MY ABSENCE!
SH-ROOOOOM!
AIYEEEEEE!
MOST NOTABLY THE *ATTRACTION* THIS BACKWARDS CIVILIZATION HOLDS FOR THE YOUNG INHUMAN *PRINCESS* AND HER MONGREL MUTANT *CONSORT!*
NOW, IMPART TO ME THE CURRENT *COORDINATES* INHABITED BY YOUR SORRY *SUB-SPECIES--*
--OR RISK MY *WRATH!*
SHATTERSTAR!
YES, THAT *WAS* MY FORMER DESIGNATION, WAS IT NOT?
ONE I AM NOW *UNWORTHY* TO CLAIM, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I HAVE *FULFILLED* MY OBLIGATION TO THE EMPIRE!
FOR *NOW,* YOU MAY ADDRESS ME AS *ARIDES!*

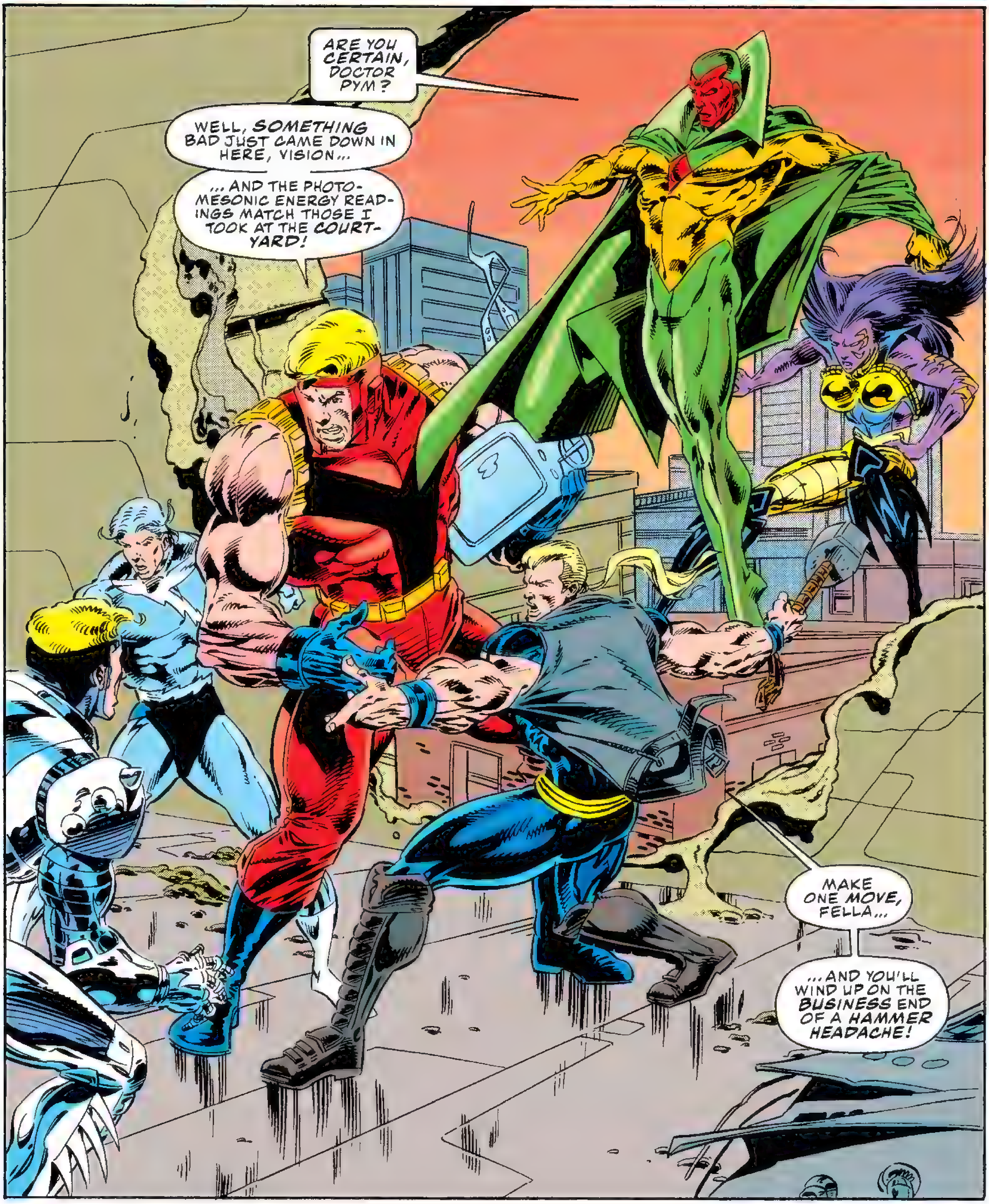
A FOOL BY ANY OTHER NAME, ARIDES...
...REMAINS EXACTLY THAT!
I HAVE NOT SO SOON FORGOTTEN OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER...
...NOR FORGIVEN THE MYRIAD CRUELTIES YOU INFLICTED UPON MY PEOPLE! *
VKOOSH!
* INHUMANS #4-6, 1976. --READY-FOR-RETIREMENT RALF.
A MOST SPECTACULAR DISPLAY, CHILD!
INDEED, YOU SHOULD PROVE A VALUABLE... COMMODITY ...IN THE COMING CONFLICT!
HOWEVER, AGAINST ONE WHOSE BODY HAS, SINCE CHILDHOOD, BEEN SUBJECTED TO THE RIGORS OF PHOTO-MESONIC ENERGY...
FWA-VAASH!
...YOU ARE AS STRAWS IN THE MIDST OF A HURRICANE!
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOU, EARTH-SPAWN...
FWA-VOOM!

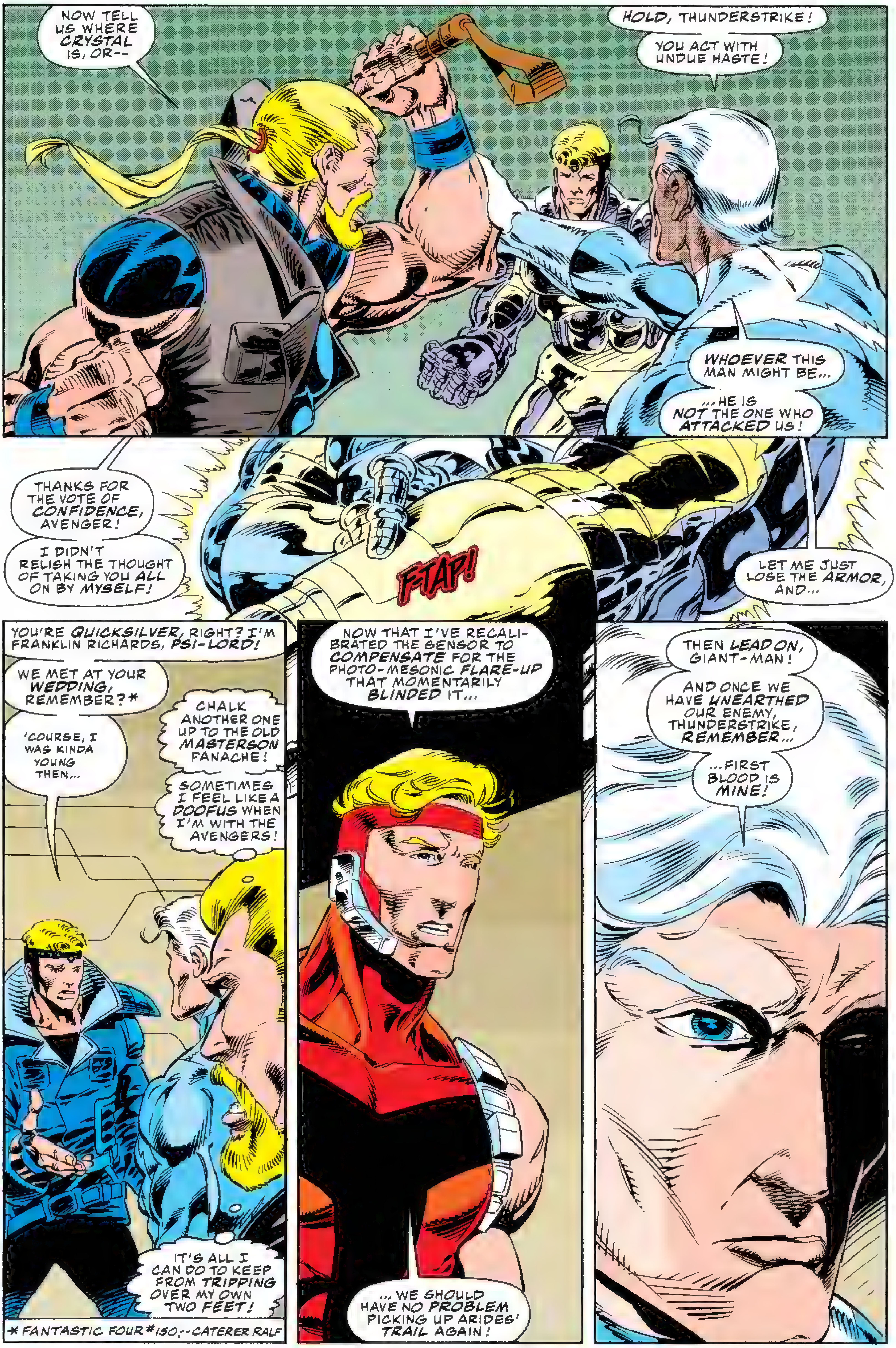

...THUS, YOU SHALL REMAIN BEHIND!
BUT THE PRINCESS MAY YET LEAD ME TO--
--eh?
THE LIFE-MATRIX INDICATOR... IT GLOWS!
ANOTHER INHUMAN HAS SPONTANEOUSLY MATERIALIZED IN OUR GENERAL LOCALITY!
CURIOUS.
THIS PHENOMENON MUST BE INVESTIGATED AT ONCE!
VREEEEEEEEEEEE
REST WELL, PRINCESS...
FOR, WHEN YOU AWAKEN...
...IT SHALL BE BESIDE YOUR BRETHREN... EN ROUTE TO KREE-LAR!
CRYSTAL!
I WILL GET YOU BACK, MY WIFE!
RECOVER YOU...
...OR AVENGE YOU!
VSHOOM!

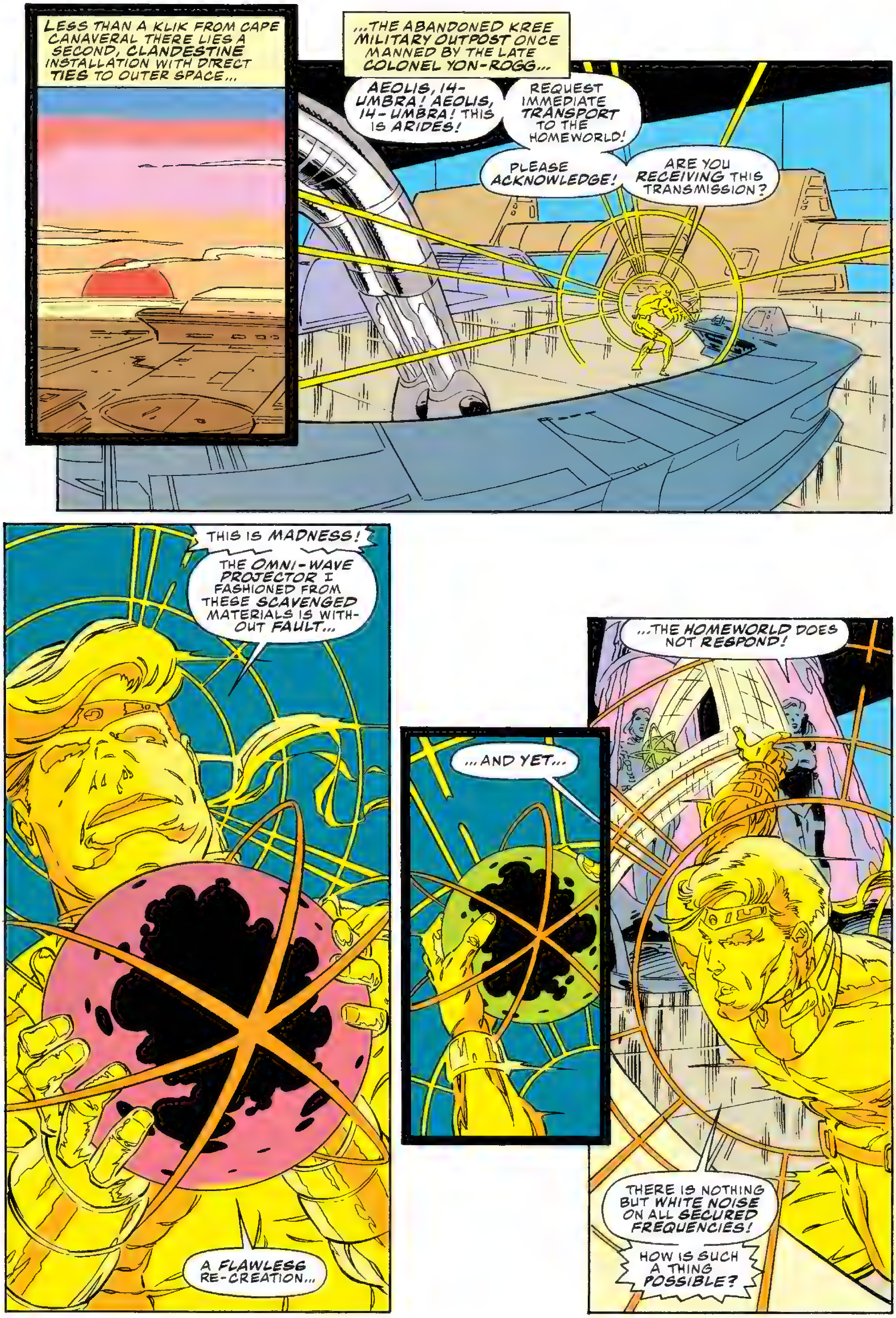

SOHO, THE HOME AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED FANTASTIC FORCE.
AW, FRANKLIN...
...WHY DO I ALWAYS GET STUCK WITH ALL THE HEAVY LIFTING?
MOSTLY BECAUSE YOU'RE BUILT FOR IT, DEV!
AND WITH BOTH HUNTARA AND VIBRAXAS OFF IN WAKANDA...
...THE CLEAN-UP CREW IS A LITTLE SHORT-HANDED TODAY.
YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME TO DO THE ENTIRE JOB TELEKINETICALLY!
THERE!
NOW THAT THIS NEW TELE-SECURITY MONITOR'S BEEN INSTALLED, WE SHOULD BE SAFE FROM ANY UNWELCOME INCURSIONS!
ZZZUMM
IMPOSSIBLE!
THE BIO-PATTERN LOCK HAS BEEN LOST!
BUT NOT BEFORE I'D FOLLOWED THE SIGNAL TO THIS EDIFICE!
HE IS NEAR, I CAN SENSE IT!
SURRENDER THE CLOAKED INHUMAN...
...OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!
THIS THAT SEEKER YOU TOLD ME ABOUT, DEV?*
NO WAY! I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE IN MY LIFE...
* SEE FANTASTIC FORCE #3.-- RALF
...BUT THAT WOMAN'S ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY! SHE'S A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY!

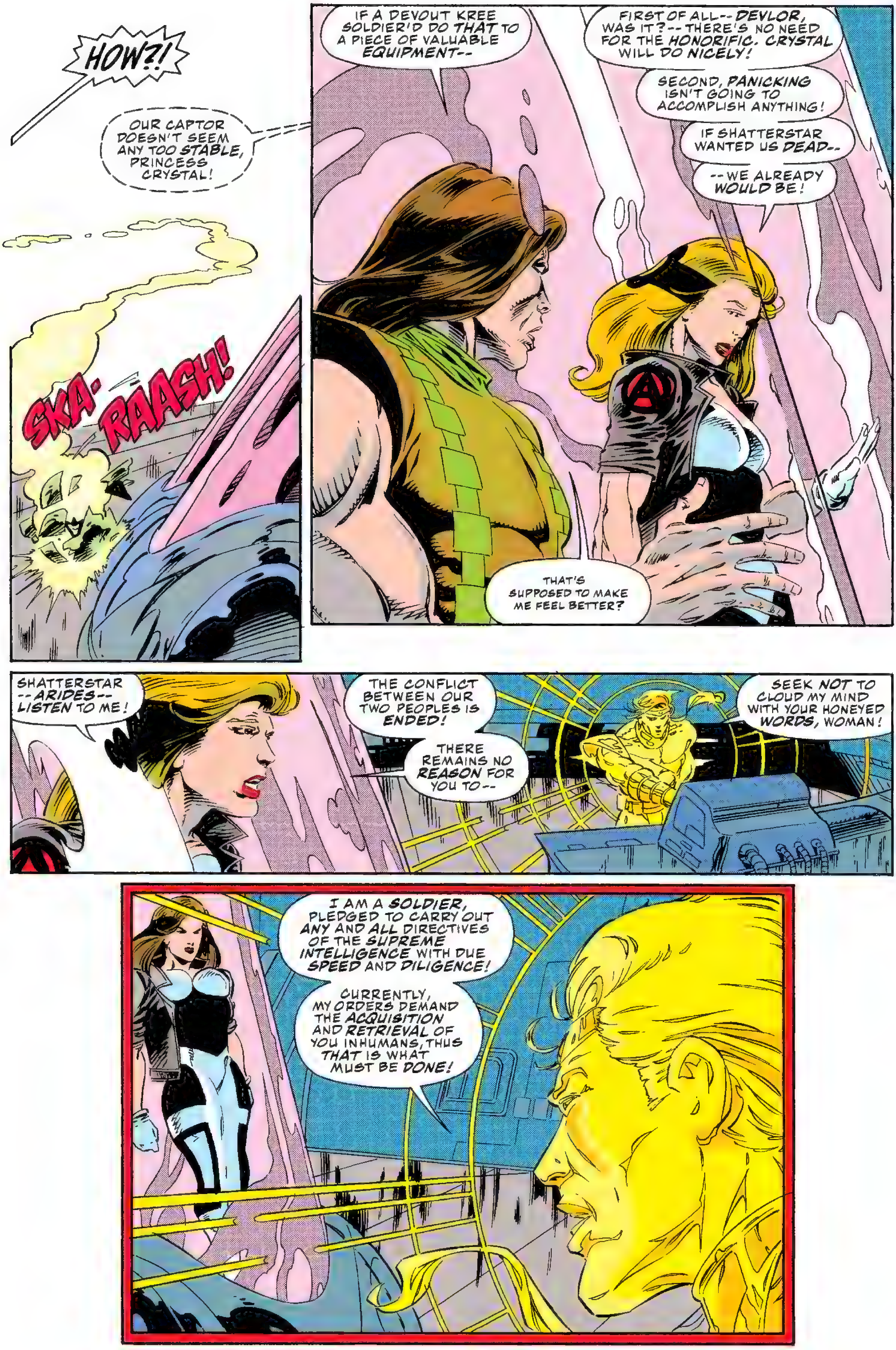

YOU'RE TURNING OUT TO BE A PRETTY POPULAR *GUY*, DEVLOR!
BUT SINCE THIS CHARACTER JUST *VAPORIZED* A GOOD DAY'S *WORK*...
...I CAN'T SAY I THINK *MUCH* OF YOUR FAN CLUB'S *RECRUITMENT STANDARDS!*
SHROOM!
FRANKLIN!
IF YOU'VE *HURT* HIM...
...YOU'LL LEARN *FIRSTHAND* WHY *DEVLOR*...
...IS THE *DEADLIEST* INHUMAN OF *ALL!*
GRAAAHR!
SHREEEEE!
YES.
AT LAST, ALL BECOMES *CLEAR!*
IN THE TIME I HAVE BEEN... *AWAY*... THE INHUMANS MUST HAVE DISCOVERED HOW TO *MASK* THEIR GENETIC SIGNATURES IN *ORDER* TO ELUDE *PURSUIT* AND *CAPTURE!*
OR PERHAPS THE CREATURE IS SOME *NEW* BREED OF HITHERTO UNRECORDED *CHROMOSOMAL ARCHETYPE!*
IN *EITHER* EVENT...

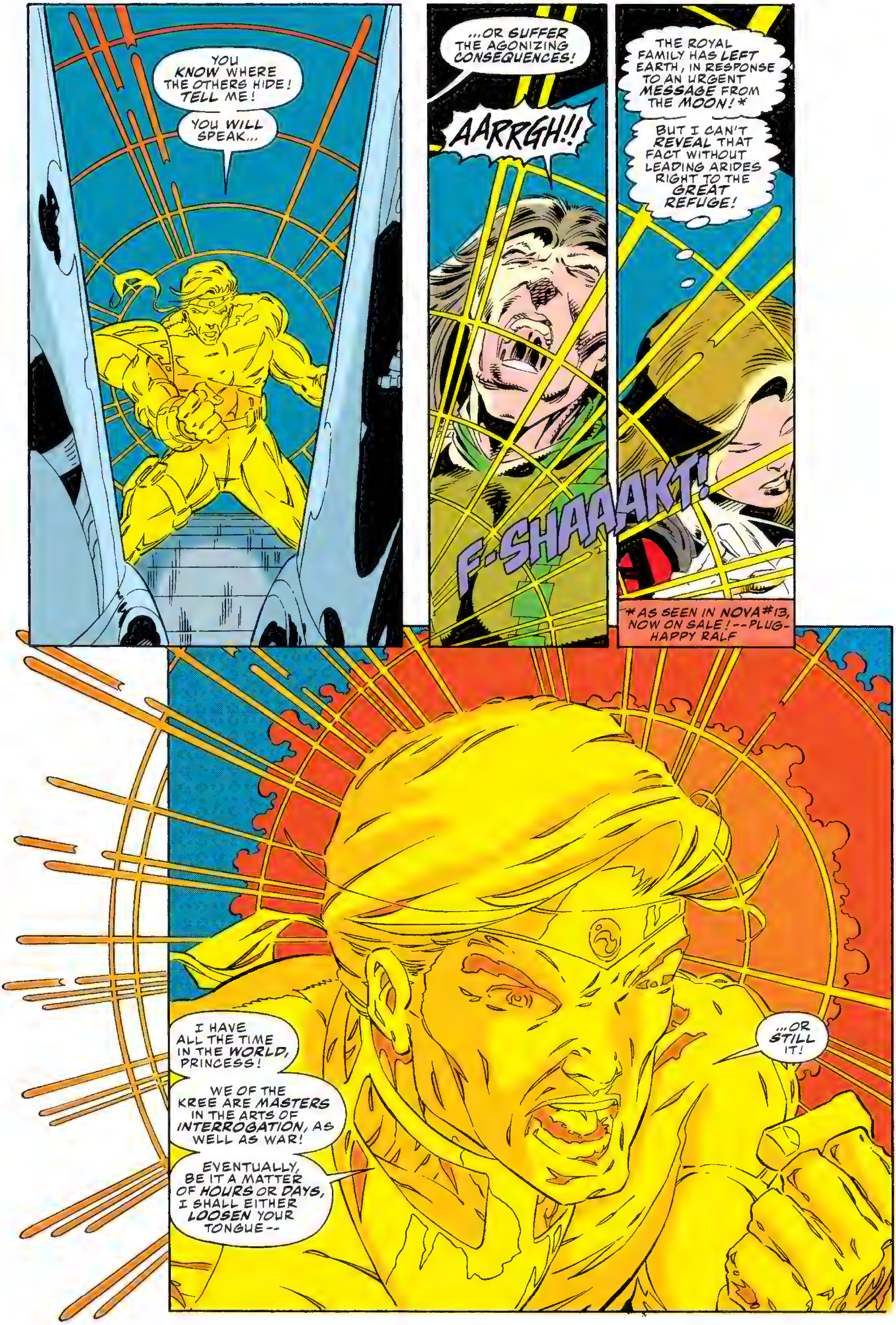

"...BOTH THE PRINCESS...
"...AND THE BESTIAL ONE...
"...ARE MINE!"
uhh... DEVLOR...!
THIS IS THE PLACE!

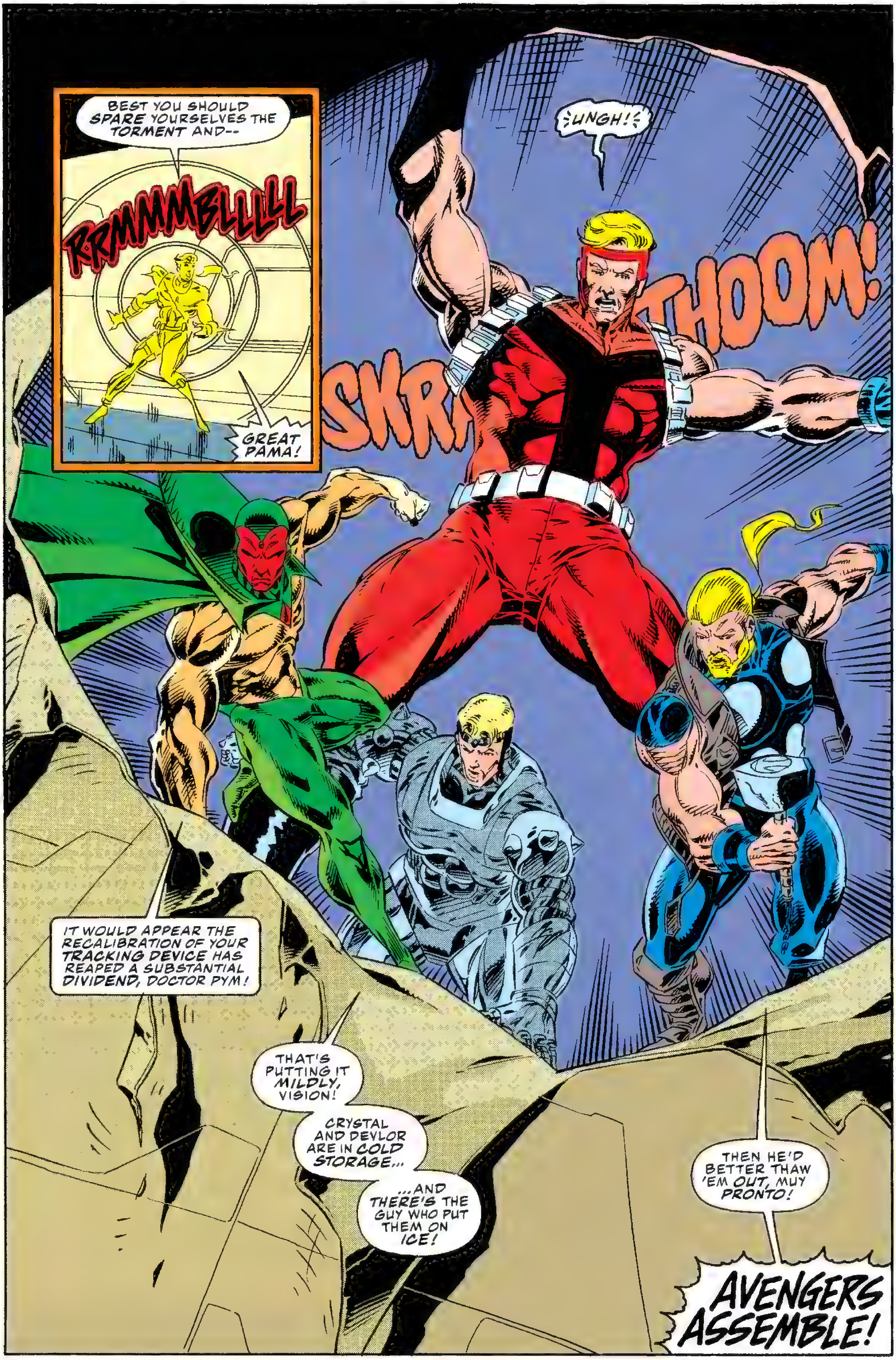

ARE YOU CERTAIN, DOCTOR PYM?
WELL, SOMETHING BAD JUST CAME DOWN IN HERE, VISION...
...AND THE PHOTO-MESONIC ENERGY READINGS MATCH THOSE I TOOK AT THE COURTYARD!
MAKE ONE MOVE, FELLA...
...AND YOU'LL WIND UP ON THE BUSINESS END OF A HAMMER HEADACHE!

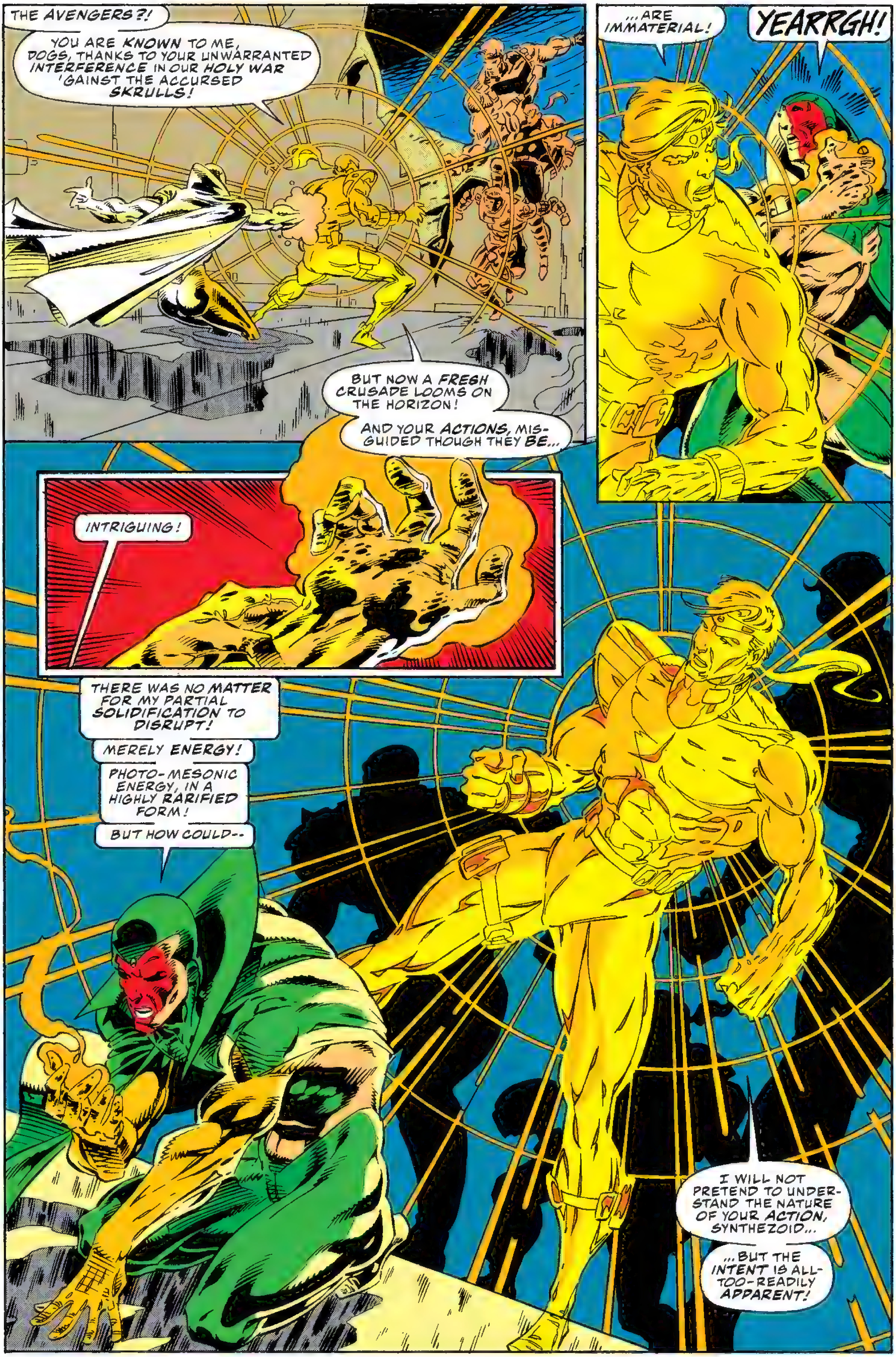

NOW TELL US WHERE CRYSTAL IS, OR--
HOLD, THUNDERSTRIKE!
YOU ACT WITH UNDUE HASTE!
WHOEVER THIS MAN MIGHT BE...
...HE IS NOT THE ONE WHO ATTACKED US!
THANKS FOR THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, AVENGER!
I DIDN'T RELISH THE THOUGHT OF TAKING YOU ALL ON BY MYSELF!
F-TAP!
LET ME JUST LOSE THE ARMOR, AND...
YOU'RE QUICKSILVER, RIGHT? I'M FRANKLIN RICHARDS, PSI-LORD!
WE MET AT YOUR WEDDING, REMEMBER?*
'COURSE, I WAS KINDA YOUNG THEN...
CHALK ANOTHER ONE UP TO THE OLD MASTERSON PANACHE!
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A DOOFUS WHEN I'M WITH THE AVENGERS!
IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO KEEP FROM TRIPPING OVER MY OWN TWO FEET!
* FANTASTIC FOUR #150.--CATERER RALF
NOW THAT I'VE RECALIBRATED THE SENSOR TO COMPENSATE FOR THE PHOTO-MESONIC FLARE-UP THAT MOMENTARILY BLINDED IT...
...WE SHOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM PICKING UP ARIDES' TRAIL AGAIN!
THEN LEAD ON, GIANT-MAN!
AND ONCE WE HAVE UNEARTHED OUR ENEMY, THUNDERSTRIKE, REMEMBER...
...FIRST BLOOD IS MINE!

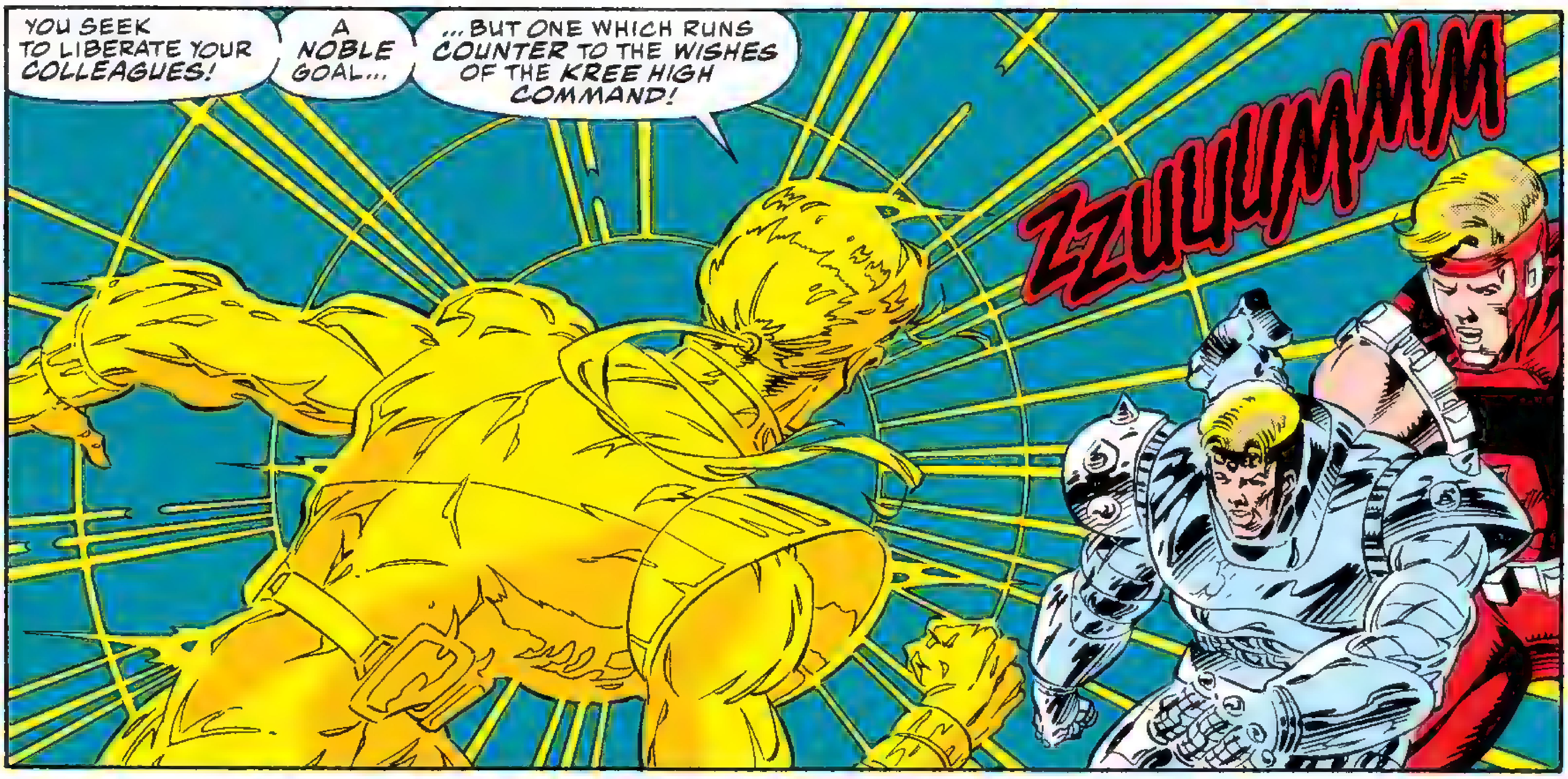

LESS THAN A KLIK FROM CAPE CANAVERAL THERE LIES A SECOND, CLANDESTINE INSTALLATION WITH DIRECT TIES TO OUTER SPACE...
...THE ABANDONED KREE MILITARY OUTPOST ONCE MANNED BY THE LATE COLONEL YON-ROGG...
AEOLIS, 14-UMBRA! AEOLIS, 14-UMBRA! THIS IS ARIDES!
REQUEST IMMEDIATE TRANSPORT TO THE HOMEWORLD!
PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE!
ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS TRANSMISSION?
THIS IS MADNESS!
THE OMNI-WAVE PROJECTOR I FASHIONED FROM THESE SCAVENGED MATERIALS IS WITHOUT FAULT...
A FLAWLESS RE-CREATION...
...AND YET...
...THE HOMEWORLD DOES NOT RESPOND!
THERE IS NOTHING BUT WHITE NOISE ON ALL SECURED FREQUENCIES!
HOW IS SUCH A THING POSSIBLE?

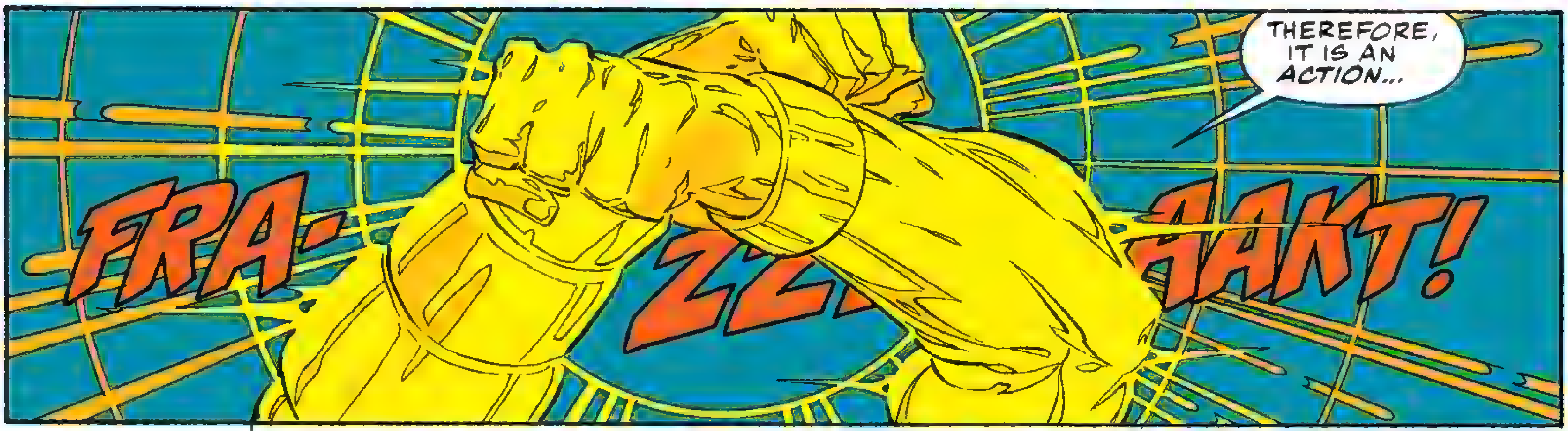

HOW?!
OUR CAPTOR DOESN'T SEEM ANY TOO STABLE, PRINCESS CRYSTAL!
SKA-RAASH!
IF A DEVOUT KREE SOLDIER'D DO THAT TO A PIECE OF VALUABLE EQUIPMENT--
FIRST OF ALL--DEVLOR, WAS IT?--THERE'S NO NEED FOR THE HONORIFIC. CRYSTAL WILL DO NICELY!
SECOND, PANICKING ISN'T GOING TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING!
IF SHATTERSTAR WANTED US DEAD--
--WE ALREADY WOULD BE!
THAT'S SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER?
SHATTERSTAR--ARIDES--LISTEN TO ME!
THE CONFLICT BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES IS ENDED!
THERE REMAINS NO REASON FOR YOU TO--
SEEK NOT TO CLOUD MY MIND WITH YOUR HONEYED WORDS, WOMAN!
I AM A SOLDIER, PLEDGED TO CARRY OUT ANY AND ALL DIRECTIVES OF THE SUPREME INTELLIGENCE WITH DUE SPEED AND DILIGENCE!
CURRENTLY, MY ORDERS DEMAND THE ACQUISITION AND RETRIEVAL OF YOU INHUMANS, THUS THAT IS WHAT MUST BE DONE!

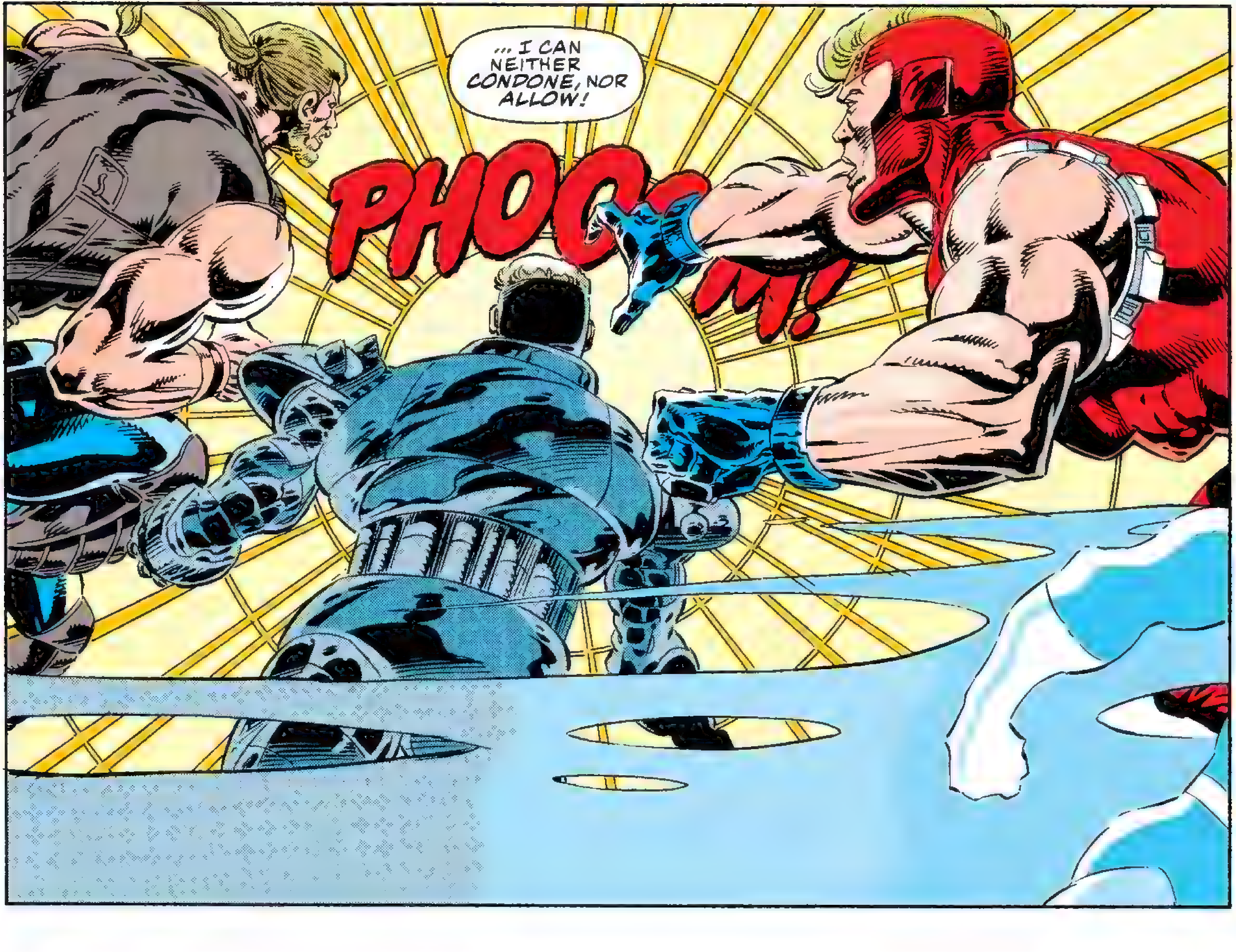

YOU KNOW WHERE THE OTHERS HIDE! TELL ME!
YOU WILL SPEAK...
...OR SUFFER THE AGONIZING CONSEQUENCES!
AARRGH!!
F-SHAAAKT!
THE ROYAL FAMILY HAS LEFT EARTH, IN RESPONSE TO AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM THE MOON!*
BUT I CAN'T REVEAL THAT FACT WITHOUT LEADING ARIDES RIGHT TO THE GREAT REFUGE!
*AS SEEN IN NOVA #13, NOW ON SALE! --PLUG-HAPPY RALF
I HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD, PRINCESS!
WE OF THE KREE ARE MASTERS IN THE ARTS OF INTERROGATION, AS WELL AS WAR!
EVENTUALLY, BE IT A MATTER OF HOURS OR DAYS, I SHALL EITHER LOOSEN YOUR TONGUE--
...OR STILL IT!

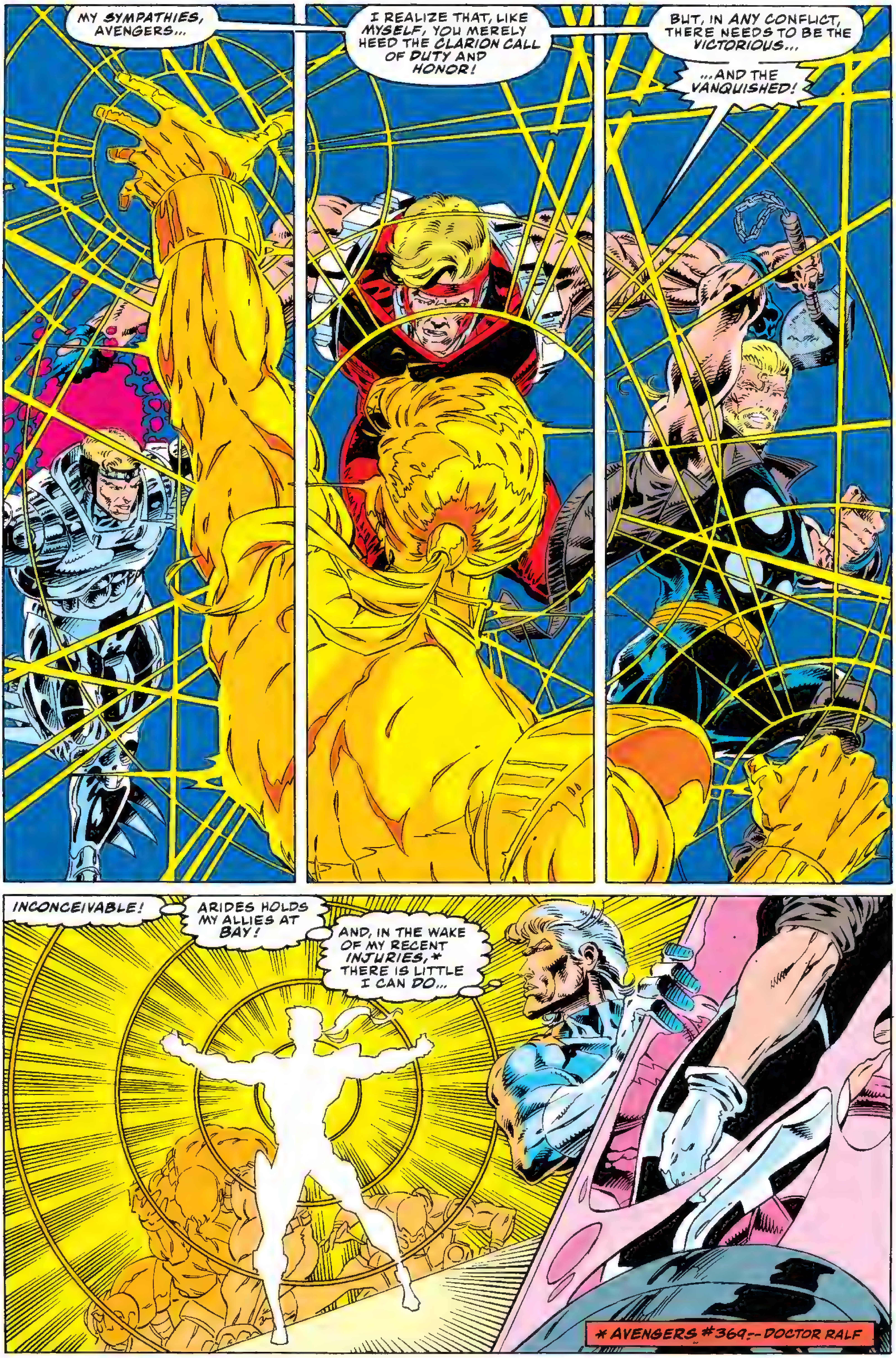

BEST YOU SHOULD SPARE YOURSELVES THE TORMENT AND--
RRMMMBLLLLL
GREAT PAMA!
UNGH!
SKRATHOOM!
IT WOULD APPEAR THE RECALIBRATION OF YOUR TRACKING DEVICE HAS REAPED A SUBSTANTIAL DIVIDEND, DOCTOR PYM!
THAT'S PUTTING IT MILDLY, VISION!
CRYSTAL AND DEVLOR ARE IN COLD STORAGE...
...AND THERE'S THE GUY WHO PUT THEM ON ICE!
THEN HE'D BETTER THAW 'EM OUT, MUY PRONTO!
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

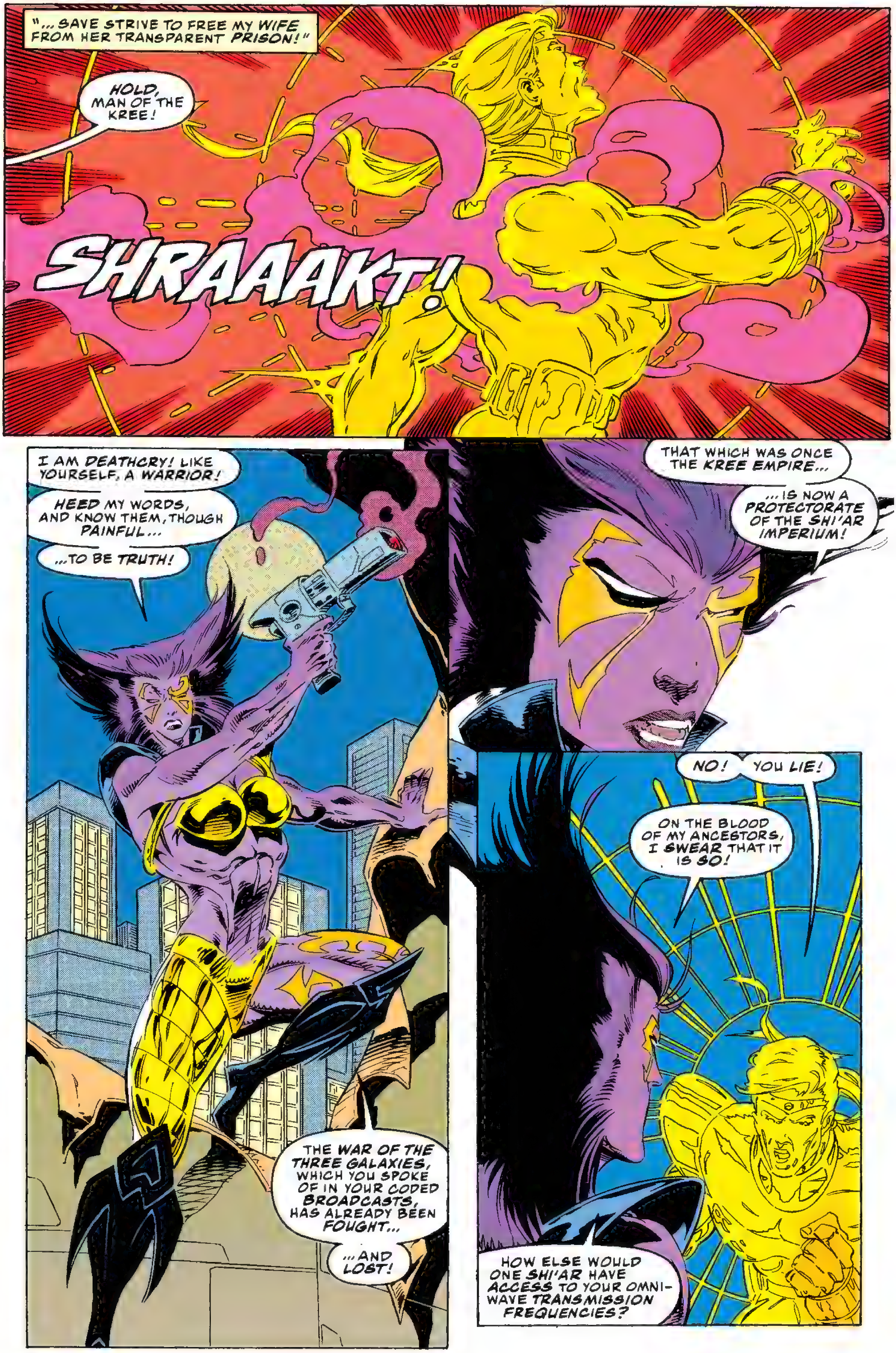

THE AVENGERS?!
YOU ARE KNOWN TO ME, DOGS, THANKS TO YOUR UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN OUR HOLY WAR 'GAINST THE ACCURSED SKRULLS!
BUT NOW A FRESH CRUSADE LOOMS ON THE HORIZON!
AND YOUR ACTIONS, MISGUIDED THOUGH THEY BE...
...ARE IMMATERIAL!
YEARRGH!
INTRIGUING!
THERE WAS NO MATTER FOR MY PARTIAL SOLIDIFICATION TO DISRUPT!
MERELY ENERGY!
PHOTO-MESONIC ENERGY, IN A HIGHLY RARIFIED FORM!
BUT HOW COULD--
I WILL NOT PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF YOUR ACTION, SYNTHEZOID...
...BUT THE INTENT IS ALL-TOO-READILY APPARENT!

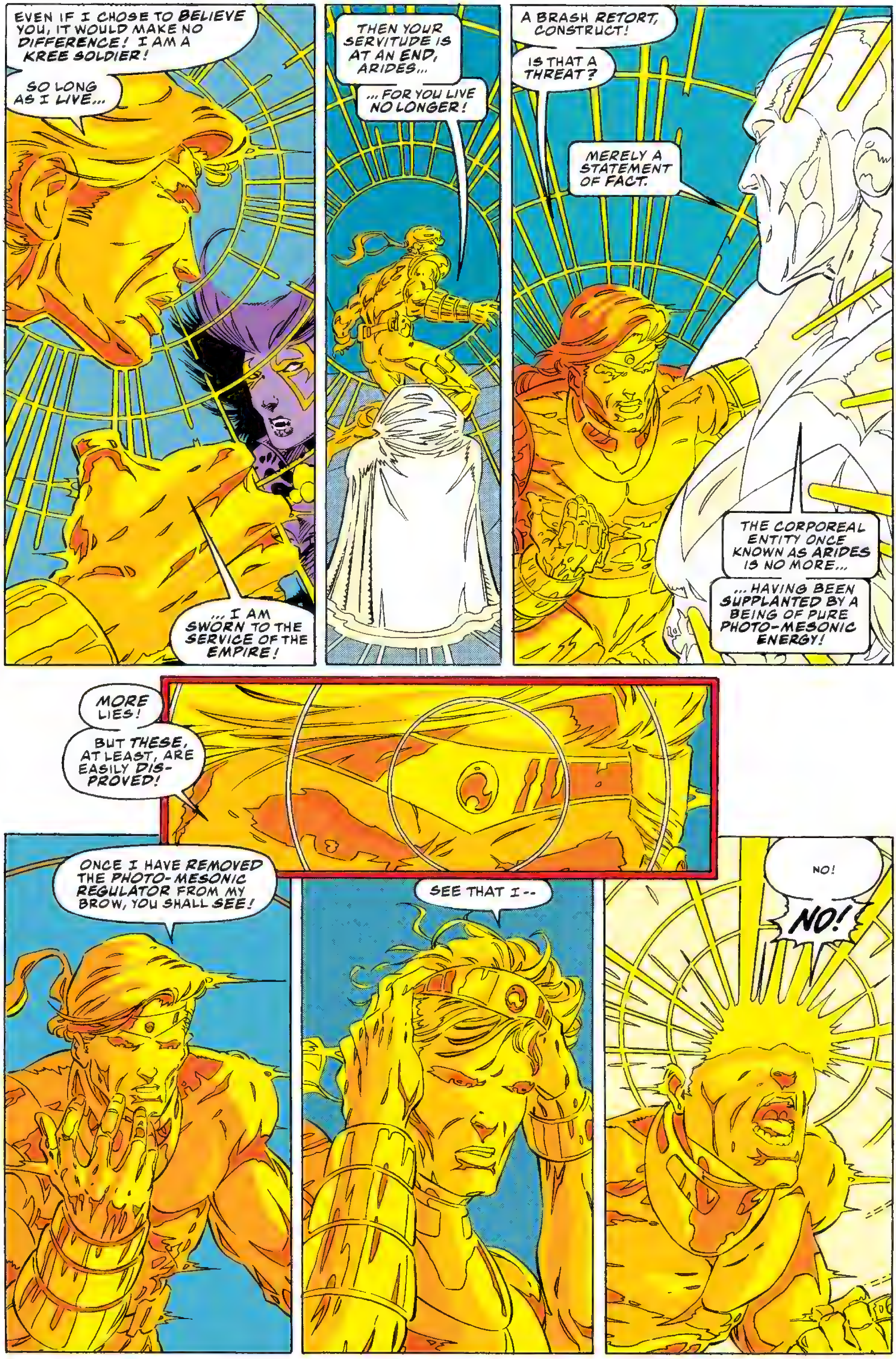

YOU SEEK TO LIBERATE YOUR COLLEAGUES!
A NOBLE GOAL...
...BUT ONE WHICH RUNS COUNTER TO THE WISHES OF THE KREE HIGH COMMAND!
ZZUUUMMMM

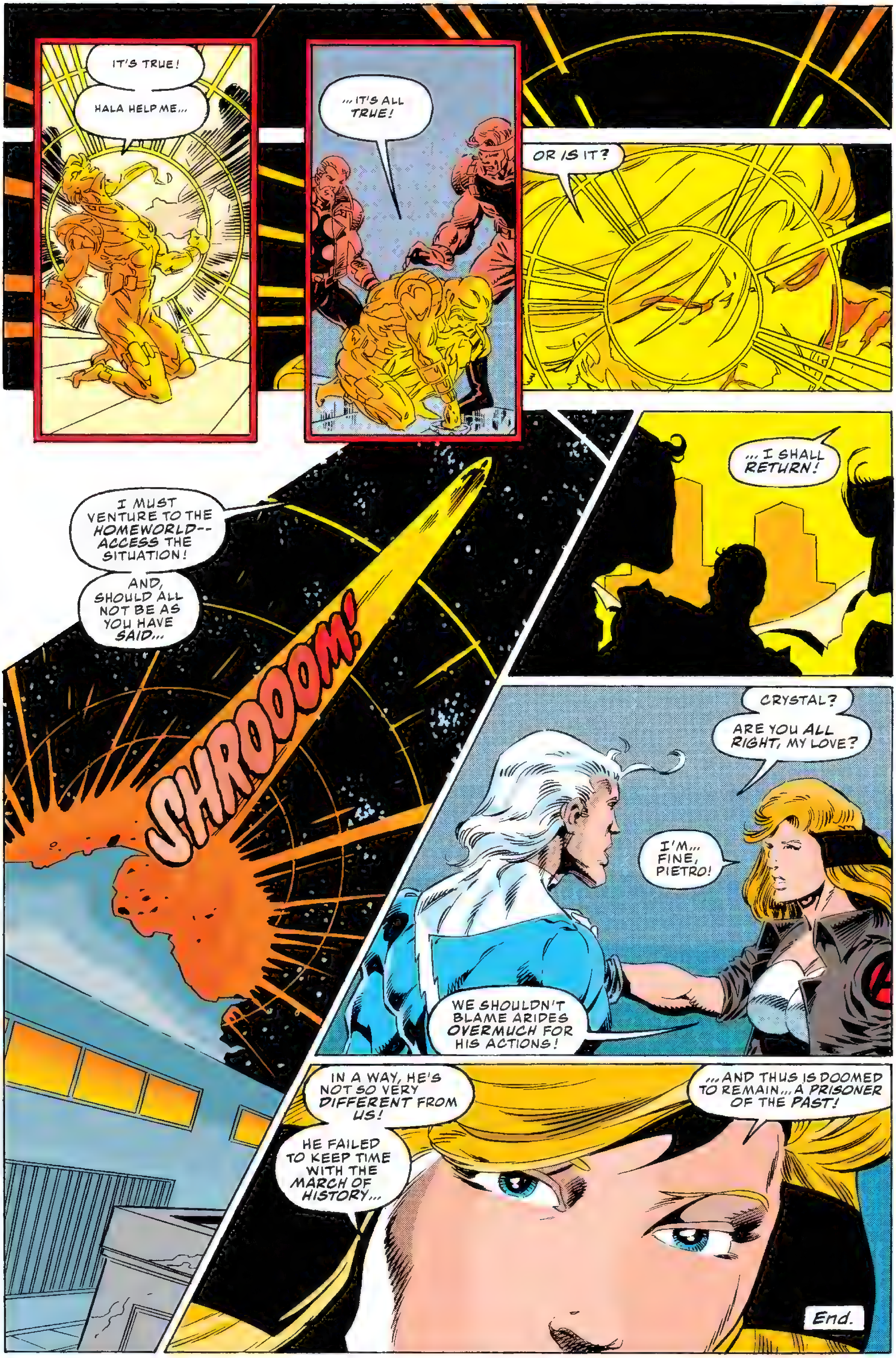

THEREFORE, IT IS AN ACTION...
FRA-ZZAAKT!


...I CAN NEITHER CONDONE, NOR ALLOW!
PHOOOM!

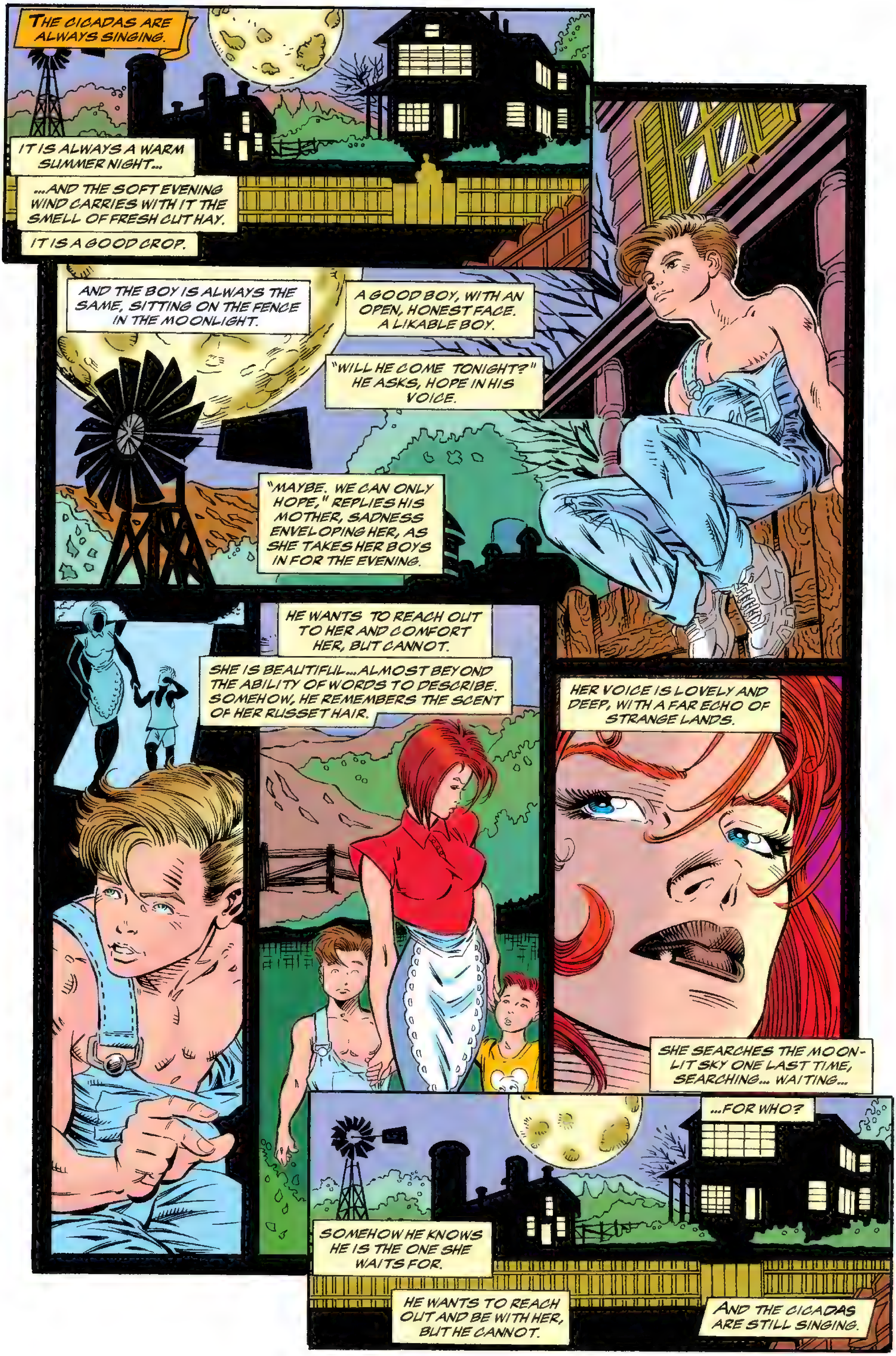

MY SYMPATHIES, AVENGERS...
I REALIZE THAT, LIKE MYSELF, YOU MERELY HEED THE CLARION CALL OF DUTY AND HONOR!
BUT, IN ANY CONFLICT, THERE NEEDS TO BE THE VICTORIOUS...
...AND THE VANQUISHED!
INCONCEIVABLE!
ARIDES HOLDS MY ALLIES AT BAY!
AND, IN THE WAKE OF MY RECENT INJURIES,* THERE IS LITTLE I CAN DO...
* AVENGERS #369.-- DOCTOR RALF


"...SAVE STRIVE TO FREE MY WIFE FROM HER TRANSPARENT PRISON!"
HOLD, MAN OF THE KREE!
SHRAAAKT!
I AM DEATHCRY! LIKE YOURSELF, A WARRIOR!
HEED MY WORDS, AND KNOW THEM, THOUGH PAINFUL...
...TO BE TRUTH!
THE WAR OF THE THREE GALAXIES, WHICH YOU SPOKE OF IN YOUR CODED BROADCASTS, HAS ALREADY BEEN FOUGHT...
...AND LOST!
THAT WHICH WAS ONCE THE KREE EMPIRE...
...IS NOW A PROTECTORATE OF THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM!
NO!
YOU LIE!
ON THE BLOOD OF MY ANCESTORS, I SWEAR THAT IT IS SO!
HOW ELSE WOULD ONE SHI'AR HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR OMNI-WAVE TRANSMISSION FREQUENCIES?


EVEN IF I CHOSE TO BELIEVE YOU, IT WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE! I AM A KREE SOLDIER!
SO LONG AS I LIVE...
...I AM SWORN TO THE SERVICE OF THE EMPIRE!
THEN YOUR SERVITUDE IS AT AN END, ARIDES...
...FOR YOU LIVE NO LONGER!
A BRASH RETORT, CONSTRUCT!
IS THAT A THREAT?
MERELY A STATEMENT OF FACT.
THE CORPOREAL ENTITY ONCE KNOWN AS ARIDES IS NO MORE...
...HAVING BEEN SUPPLANTED BY A BEING OF PURE PHOTO-MESONIC ENERGY!
MORE LIES!
BUT THESE, AT LEAST, ARE EASILY DIS-PROVED!
ONCE I HAVE REMOVED THE PHOTO-MESONIC REGULATOR FROM MY BROW, YOU SHALL SEE!
SEE THAT I--
NO!
NO!


IT'S TRUE!
HALA HELP ME...
...IT'S ALL TRUE!
OR IS IT?
I MUST VENTURE TO THE HOMEWORLD-- ACCESS THE SITUATION!
AND, SHOULD ALL NOT BE AS YOU HAVE SAID...
SHROOOM!
...I SHALL RETURN!
CRYSTAL?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MY LOVE?
I'M... FINE, PIETRO!
WE SHOULDN'T BLAME ARIDES OVERMUCH FOR HIS ACTIONS!
IN A WAY, HE'S NOT SO VERY DIFFERENT FROM US!
HE FAILED TO KEEP TIME WITH THE MARCH OF HISTORY...
...AND THUS IS DOOMED TO REMAIN... A PRISONER OF THE PAST!
End.

MARVEL COMICS
NOV
CHAPTER ONE
THE VISION
THE DREAMING
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY


THE CICADAS ARE ALWAYS SINGING.
IT IS ALWAYS A WARM SUMMER NIGHT...
...AND THE SOFT EVENING WIND CARRIES WITH IT THE SMELL OF FRESH CUT HAY.
IT IS A GOOD CROP.
AND THE BOY IS ALWAYS THE SAME, SITTING ON THE FENCE IN THE MOONLIGHT.
A GOOD BOY, WITH AN OPEN, HONEST FACE. A LIKABLE BOY.
"WILL HE COME TONIGHT?" HE ASKS, HOPE IN HIS VOICE.
"MAYBE. WE CAN ONLY HOPE," REPLIES HIS MOTHER, SADNESS ENVELOPING HER, AS SHE TAKES HER BOYS IN FOR THE EVENING.
HE WANTS TO REACH OUT TO HER AND COMFORT HER, BUT CANNOT.
SHE IS BEAUTIFUL...ALMOST BEYOND THE ABILITY OF WORDS TO DESCRIBE. SOMEHOW, HE REMEMBERS THE SCENT OF HER RUSSET HAIR.
HER VOICE IS LOVELY AND DEEP, WITH A FAR ECHO OF STRANGE LANDS.
SHE SEARCHES THE MOON-LIT SKY ONE LAST TIME, SEARCHING... WAITING...
...FOR WHO?
SOMEHOW HE KNOWS HE IS THE ONE SHE WAITS FOR.
HE WANTS TO REACH OUT AND BE WITH HER, BUT HE CANNOT.
AND THE CICADAS ARE STILL SINGING.

HE IS CALLED THE VISION.
AND THE NIGHT IS HIS.
LIKE A FORGOTTEN WRAITH, HE IS CARRIED ON THE WIND HIGH ABOVE THE CITY OF NEW YORK.
LIKE A MAN, HE PONDERS THE ABSURDITY OF DREAMS.
BUT HE IS NOT QUITE A MAN, RATHER A MACHINE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF ONE.
A MACHINE OF INCREDIBLE COMPLEXITY AND ELEGANCE, YES, BUT A CONSTRUCT NONETHELESS.
AND THUS, A BEING THAT SHOULD BE BEYOND--OR IS IT DEPRIVED OF--THE REACH OF DREAMS.
AND YET DREAMT HE HAS. ONE DREAM.
FOR THE PAST SEVEN DAYS, THE SAME COMES TO HIM EACH NIGHT AND HE FINDS ITS MEMORY... DISTURBING.
AND HE COMES HERE... TO THE SKY... TO DIVINE ITS MEANING, IF MEANING IT HAS.
BUT A CRY FROM BELOW ENDS ALL INTROSPECTION.
SOMEONE IS IN GREAT JEOPARDY AND HE MUST RESPOND.
FOR THE MACHINE MAN IS ALSO AN AVENGER.
WITH A THOUGHT, THE INSUBSTANTIAL BECOMES LESS SO, AND GRAVITY PULLS HIM DOWN...
EEEEEEEE
...TO EARTH...
...WHERE THE NIGHT IS NO LONGER HIS ALONE.
GIRLIE, DON'T MAKE ME HURT YOU! JUST GIVE ME YOUR MONEY!
LET GO OF MEEEEEEEE!
JEEZ, MARKIE-- SHUT HER UP, MAN!

BOB HARRAS : *story*
MANNY CLARK : *penciler*
AL VEY • MIKE MACHLAN
inkers
JOE ANDREANI : *colorist*
BILL OAKLEY : *letterer*
RALPH MACCHIO : *editor*
TOM DeFALCO
editor in chief

Stan Lee presents the VISION-- the synthetic Avenger--in his own limited series in :

DREAMS AND MADMEN

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ROY THOMAS *and* JOHN BUSCEMA

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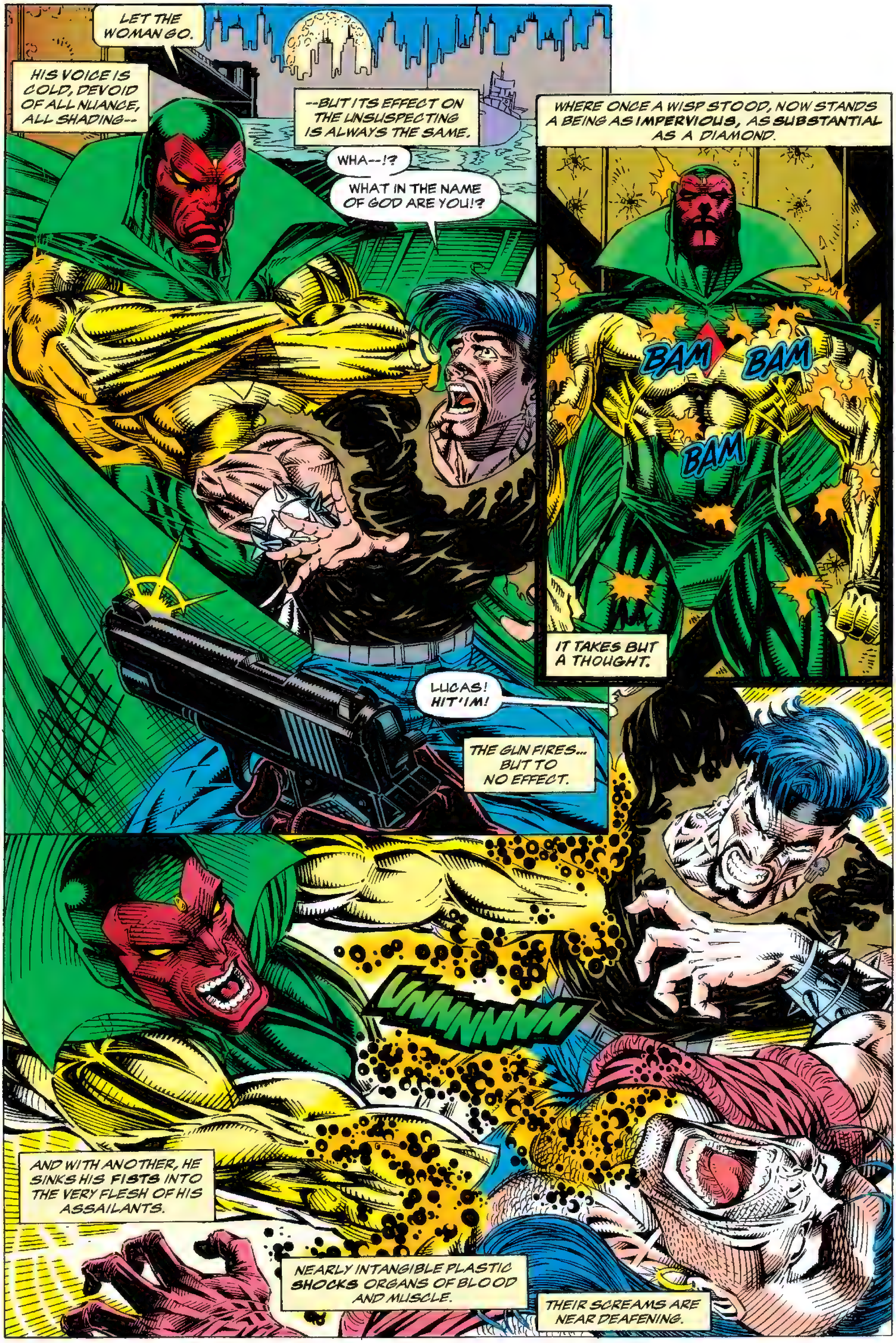
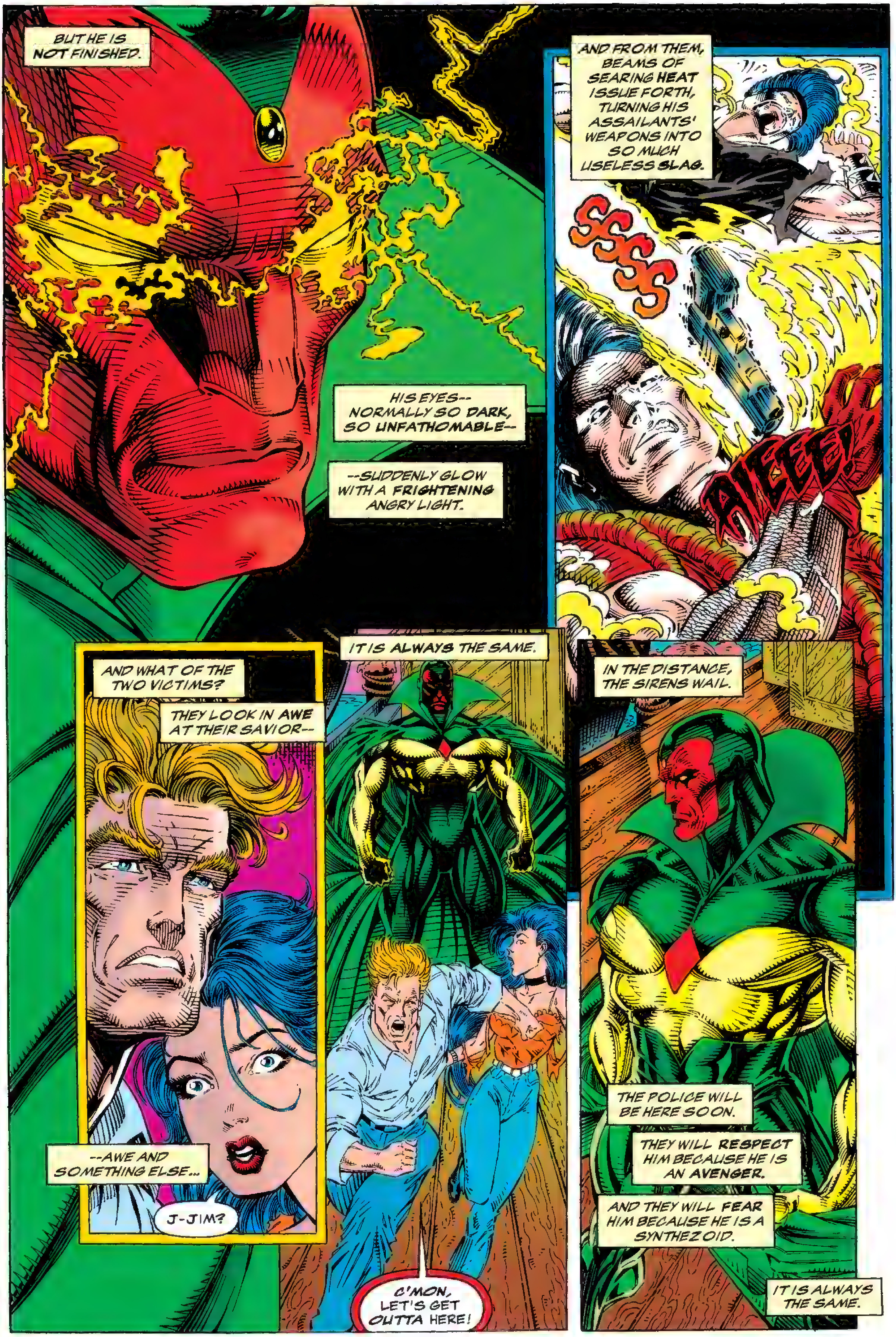
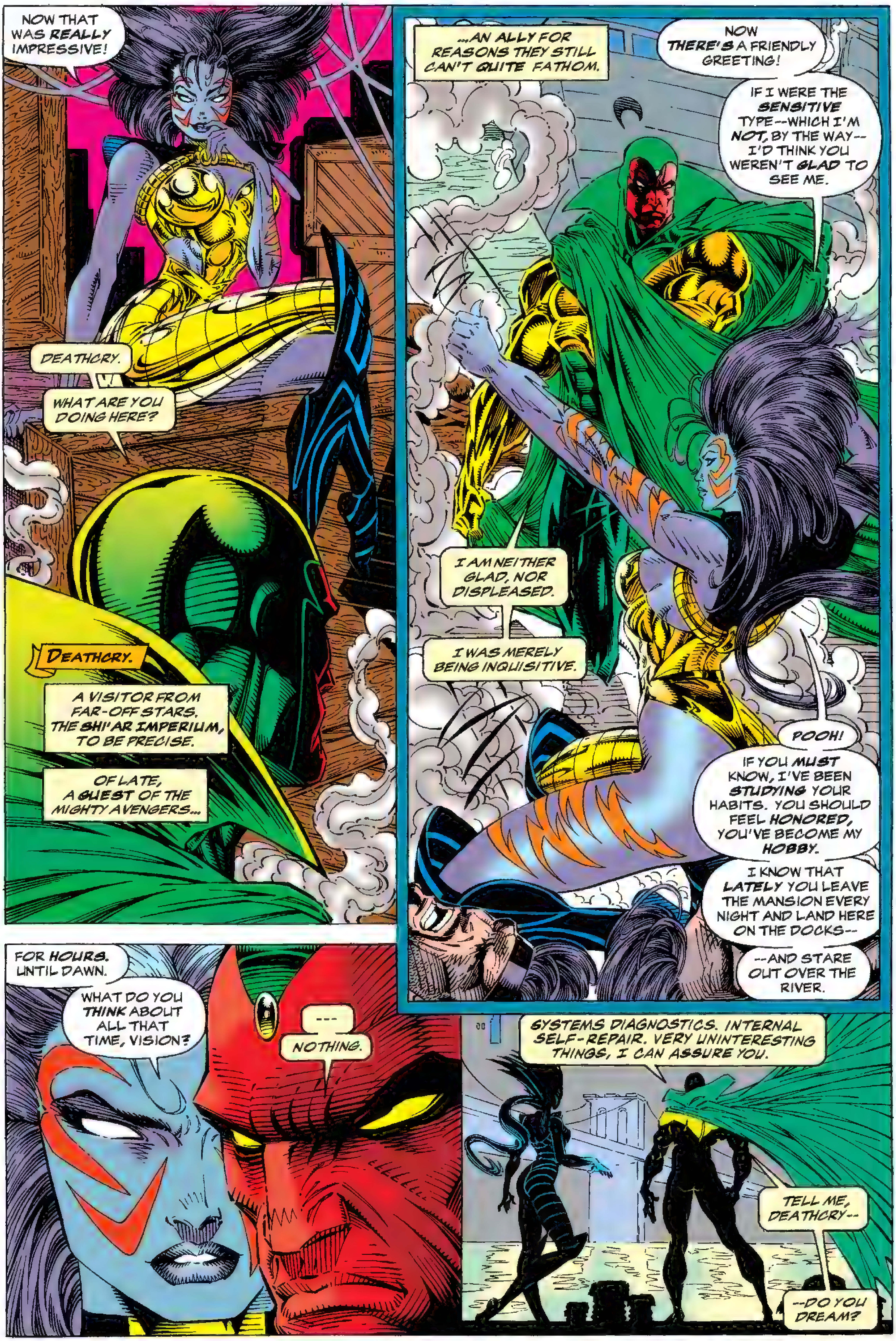
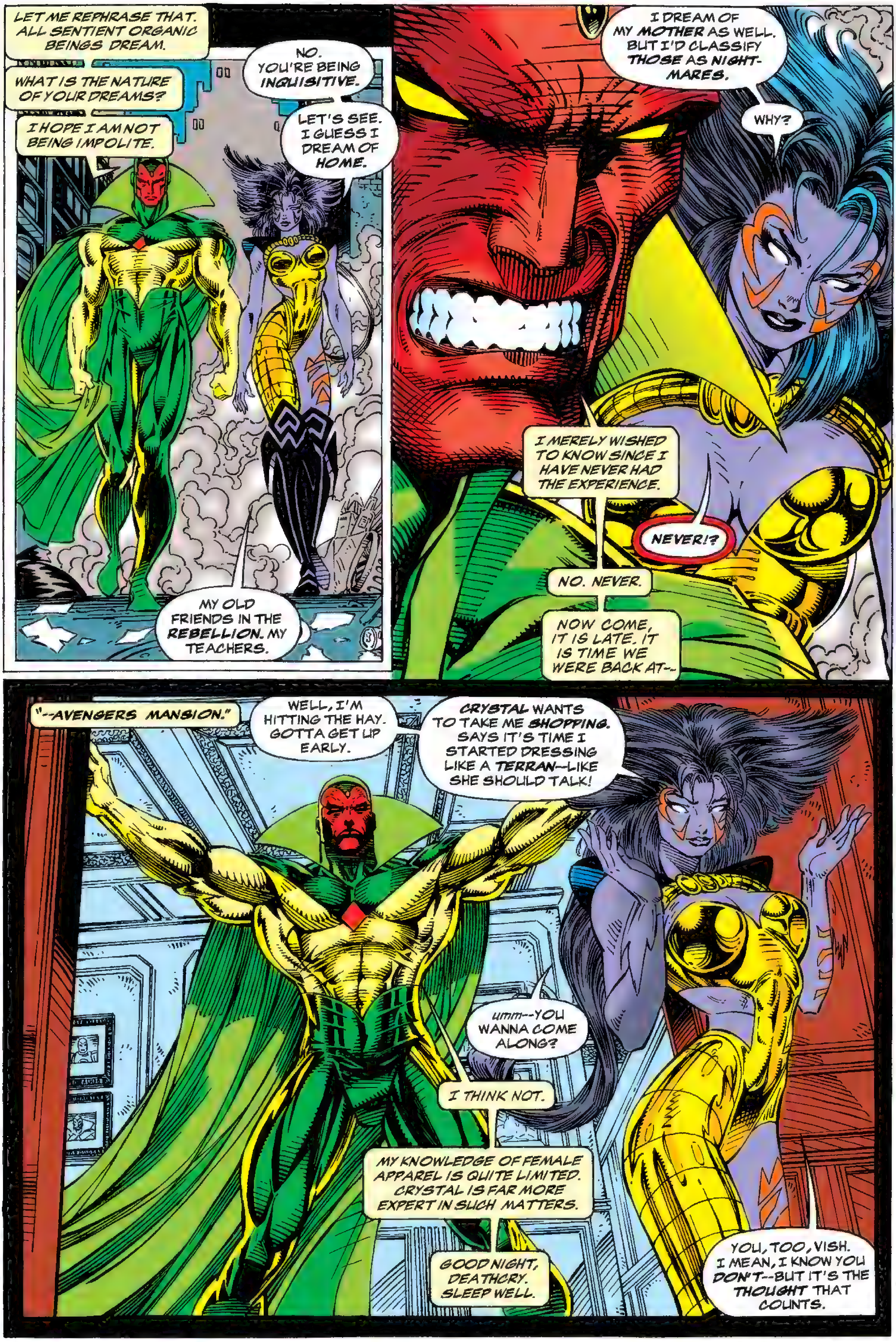
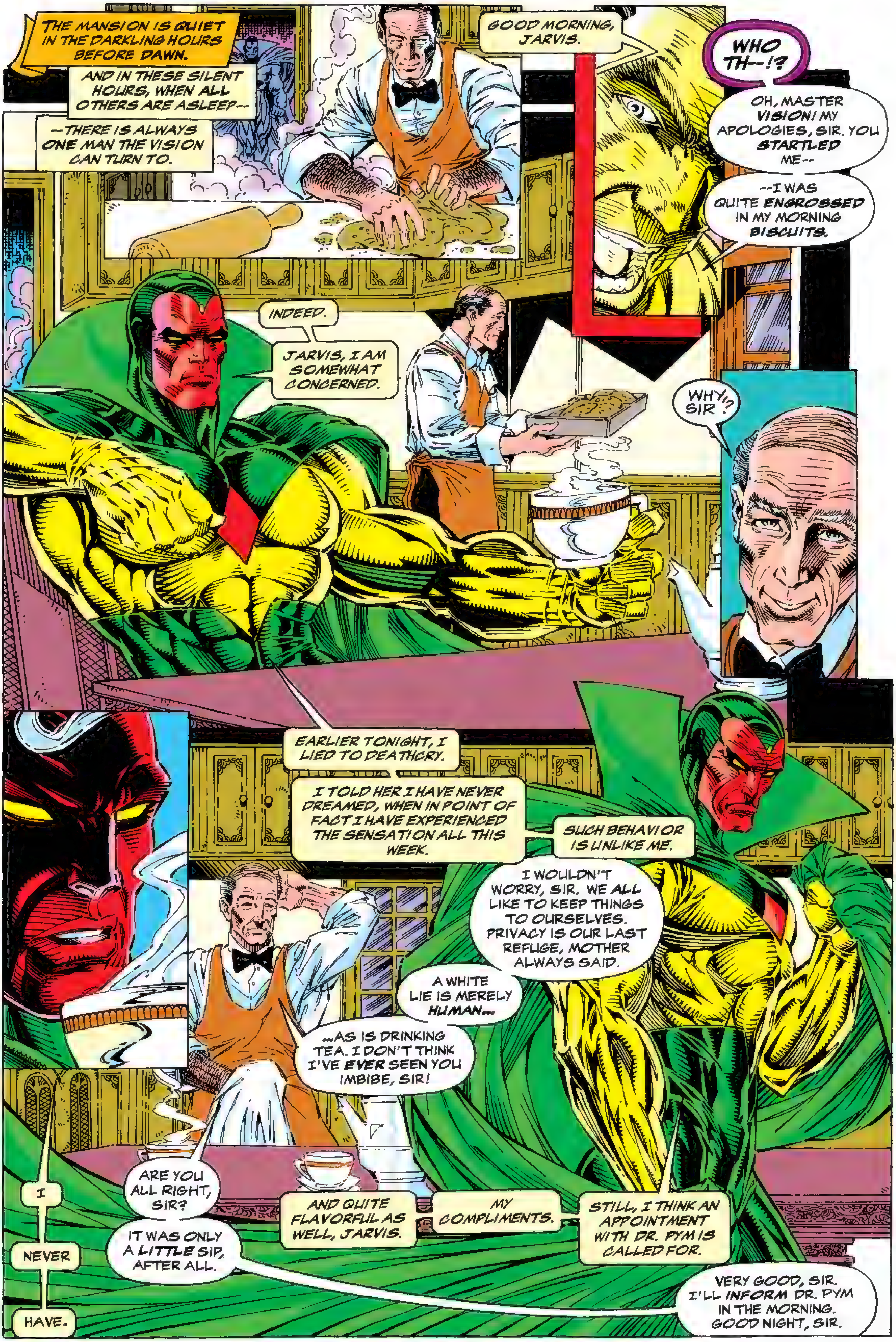

LET THE WOMAN GO.
HIS VOICE IS COLD, DEVOID OF ALL NUANCE, ALL SHADING--
--BUT ITS EFFECT ON THE UNSUSPECTING IS ALWAYS THE SAME.
WHA--!?
WHAT IN THE NAME OF GOD ARE YOU!?
LUCAS! HIT'IM!
THE GUN FIRES... BUT TO NO EFFECT.
WHERE ONCE A WISP STOOD, NOW STANDS A BEING AS IMPERVIOUS, AS SUBSTANTIAL AS A DIAMOND.
BAM
BAM
BAM
IT TAKES BUT A THOUGHT.
UNNNNNN
AND WITH ANOTHER, HE SINKS HIS FISTS INTO THE VERY FLESH OF HIS ASSAILANTS.
NEARLY INTANGIBLE PLASTIC SHOCKS ORGANS OF BLOOD AND MUSCLE.
THEIR SCREAMS ARE NEAR DEAFENING.

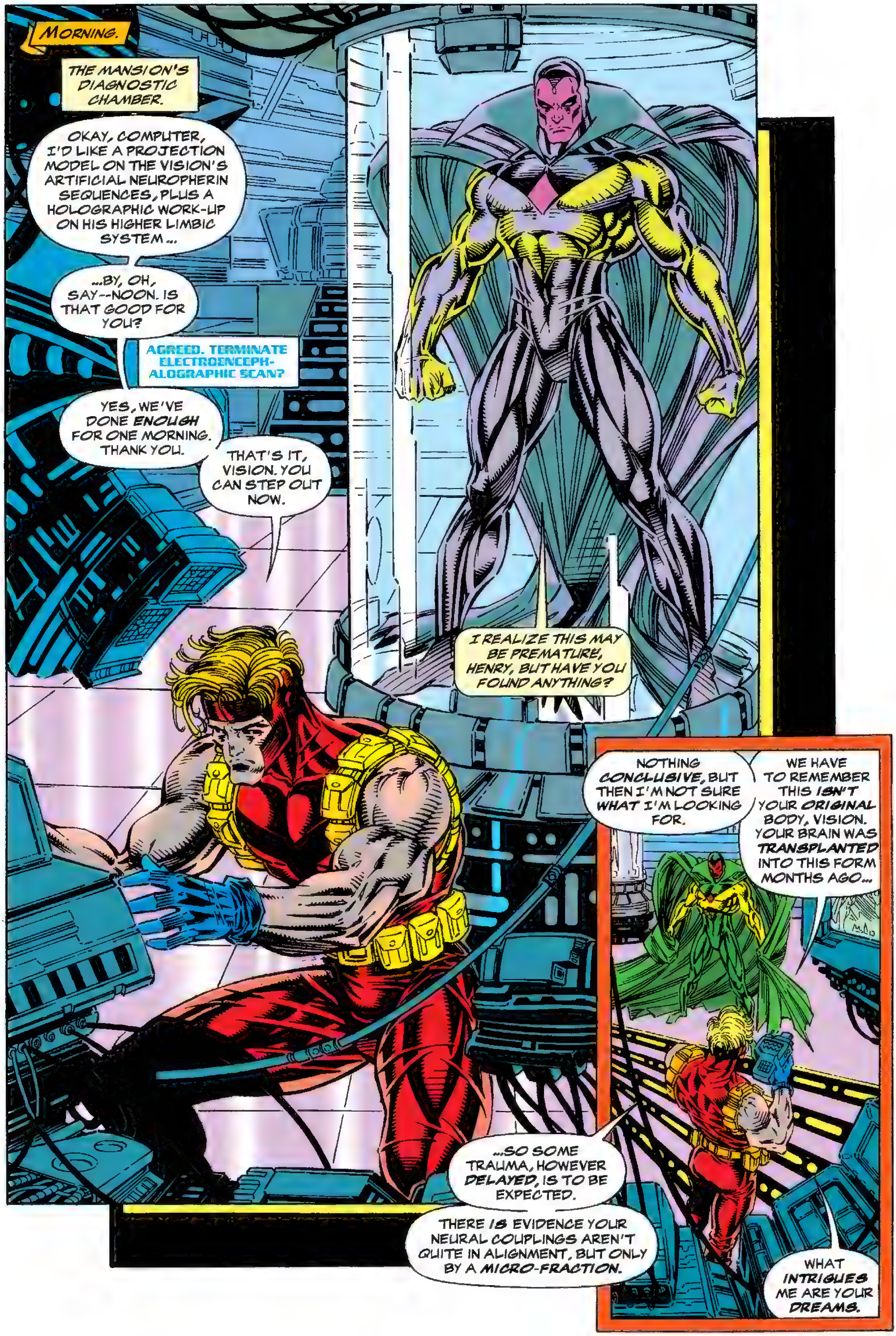

BUT HE IS NOT FINISHED.
HIS EYES-- NORMALLY SO DARK, SO UNFATHOMABLE--
--SUDDENLY GLOW WITH A FRIGHTENING ANGRY LIGHT.
AND FROM THEM, BEAMS OF SEARING HEAT ISSUE FORTH, TURNING HIS ASSAILANTS' WEAPONS INTO SO MUCH USELESS SLAG.
SSSSS
AIEEEE!
AND WHAT OF THE TWO VICTIMS?
THEY LOOK IN AWE AT THEIR SAVIOR--
--AWE AND SOMETHING ELSE...
J-JIM?
IT IS ALWAYS THE SAME.
C'MON, LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!
IN THE DISTANCE, THE SIRENS WAIL.
THE POLICE WILL BE HERE SOON.
THEY WILL RESPECT HIM BECAUSE HE IS AN AVENGER.
AND THEY WILL FEAR HIM BECAUSE HE IS A SYNTHEZOID.
IT IS ALWAYS THE SAME.

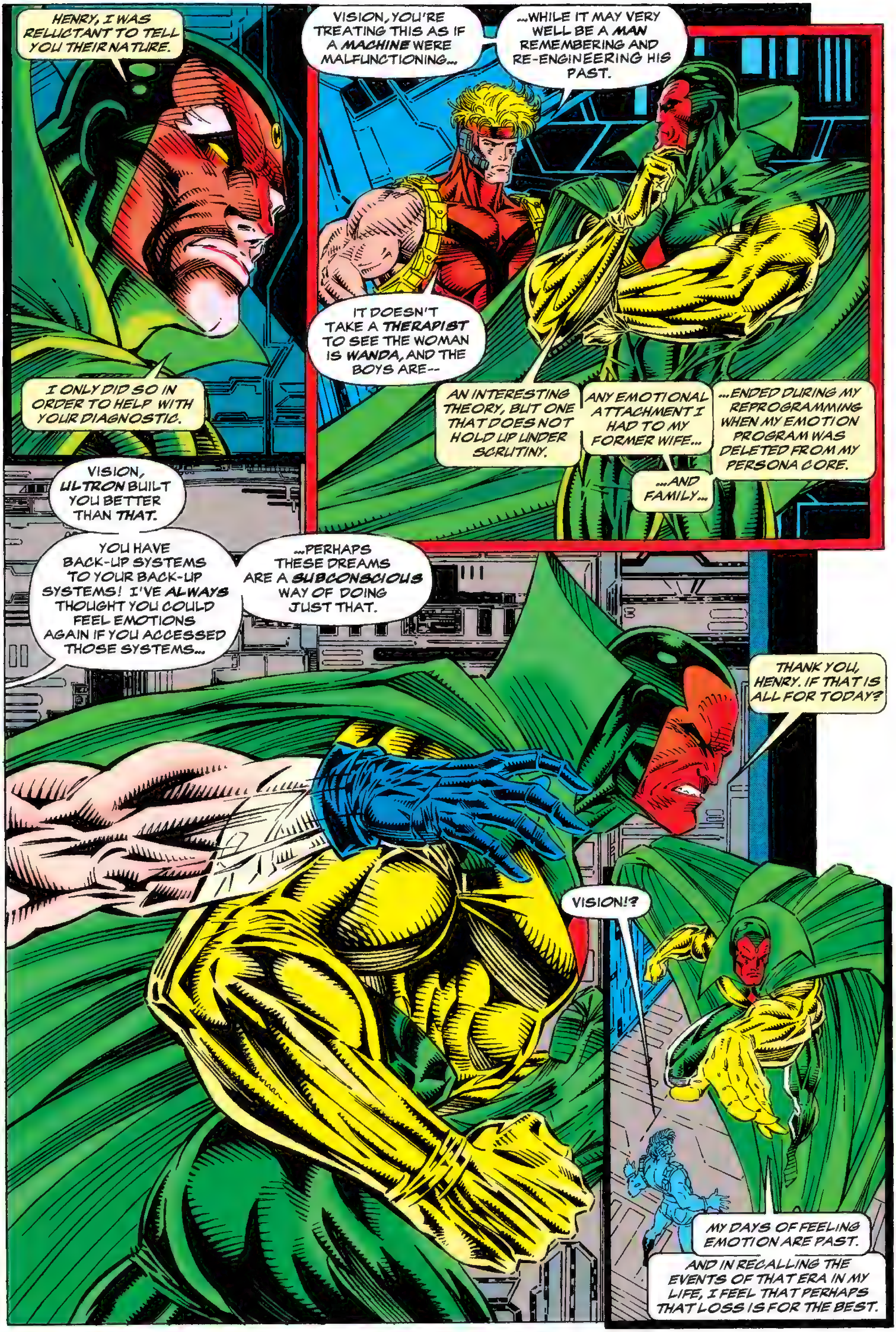

NOW THAT WAS **REALLY** IMPRESSIVE!
DEATHCRY.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DEATHCRY.
A VISITOR FROM FAR-OFF STARS. THE **SHI'AR IMPERIUM**, TO BE PRECISE.
OF LATE, A **GUEST** OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS...
...AN **ALLY** FOR REASONS THEY STILL CAN'T QUITE FATHOM.
NOW **THERE'S** A FRIENDLY GREETING!
IF I WERE THE **SENSITIVE** TYPE--WHICH I'M **NOT**, BY THE WAY--I'D THINK YOU WEREN'T **GLAD** TO SEE ME.
I AM NEITHER GLAD, NOR DISPLEASED.
I WAS MERELY BEING INQUISITIVE.
POOH!
IF YOU **MUST** KNOW, I'VE BEEN **STUDYING** YOUR HABITS. YOU SHOULD FEEL **HONORED**, YOU'VE BECOME MY **HOBBY**.
I KNOW THAT **LATELY** YOU LEAVE THE MANSION EVERY NIGHT AND LAND HERE ON THE DOCKS--
--AND STARE OUT OVER THE RIVER.
FOR **HOURS**. UNTIL DAWN.
WHAT DO YOU **THINK** ABOUT ALL THAT TIME, VISION?

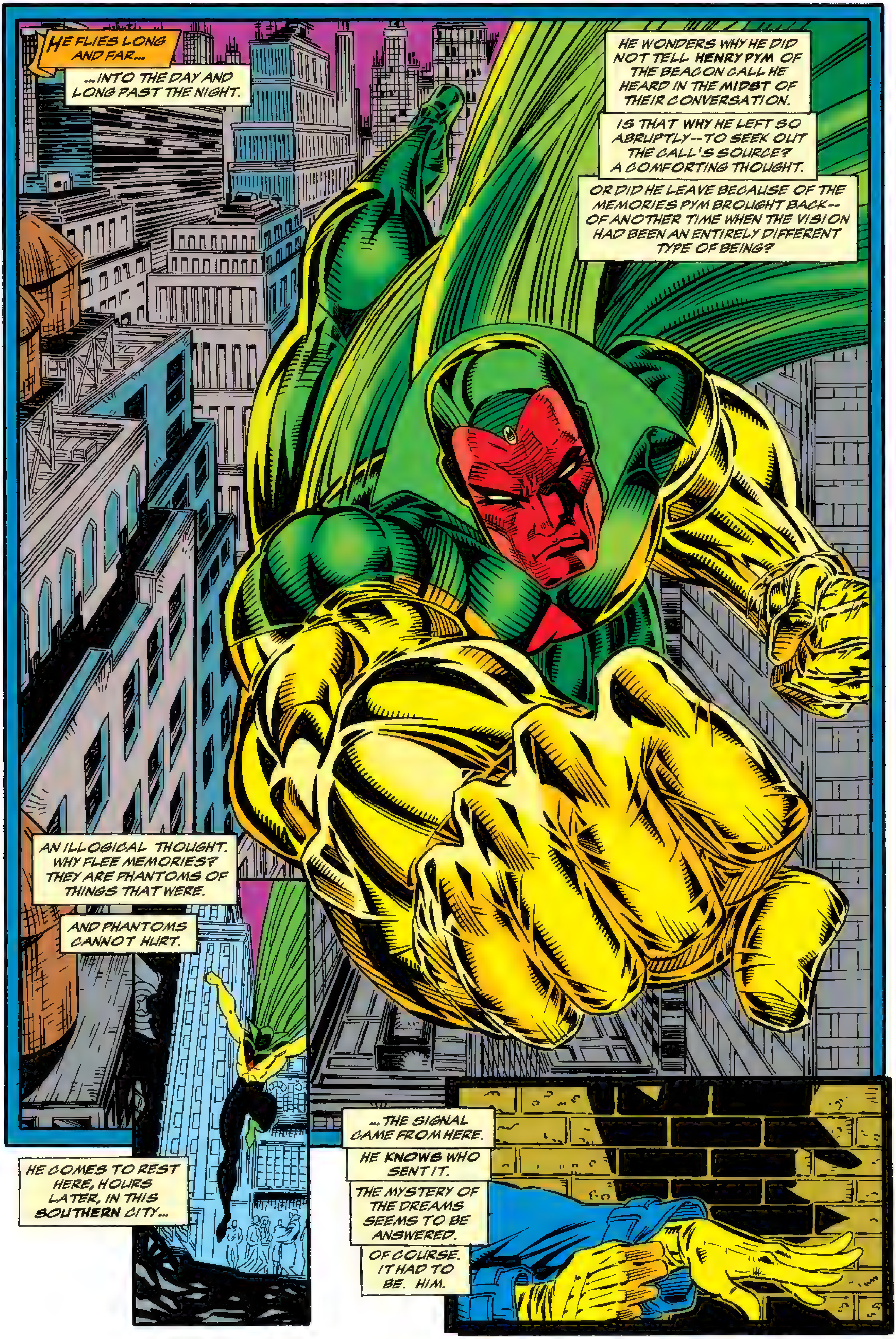
NOTHING.
SYSTEMS DIAGNOSTICS. INTERNAL SELF-REPAIR. VERY UNINTERESTING THINGS, I CAN ASSURE YOU.
TELL ME, DEATHCRY--
--DO YOU DREAM?

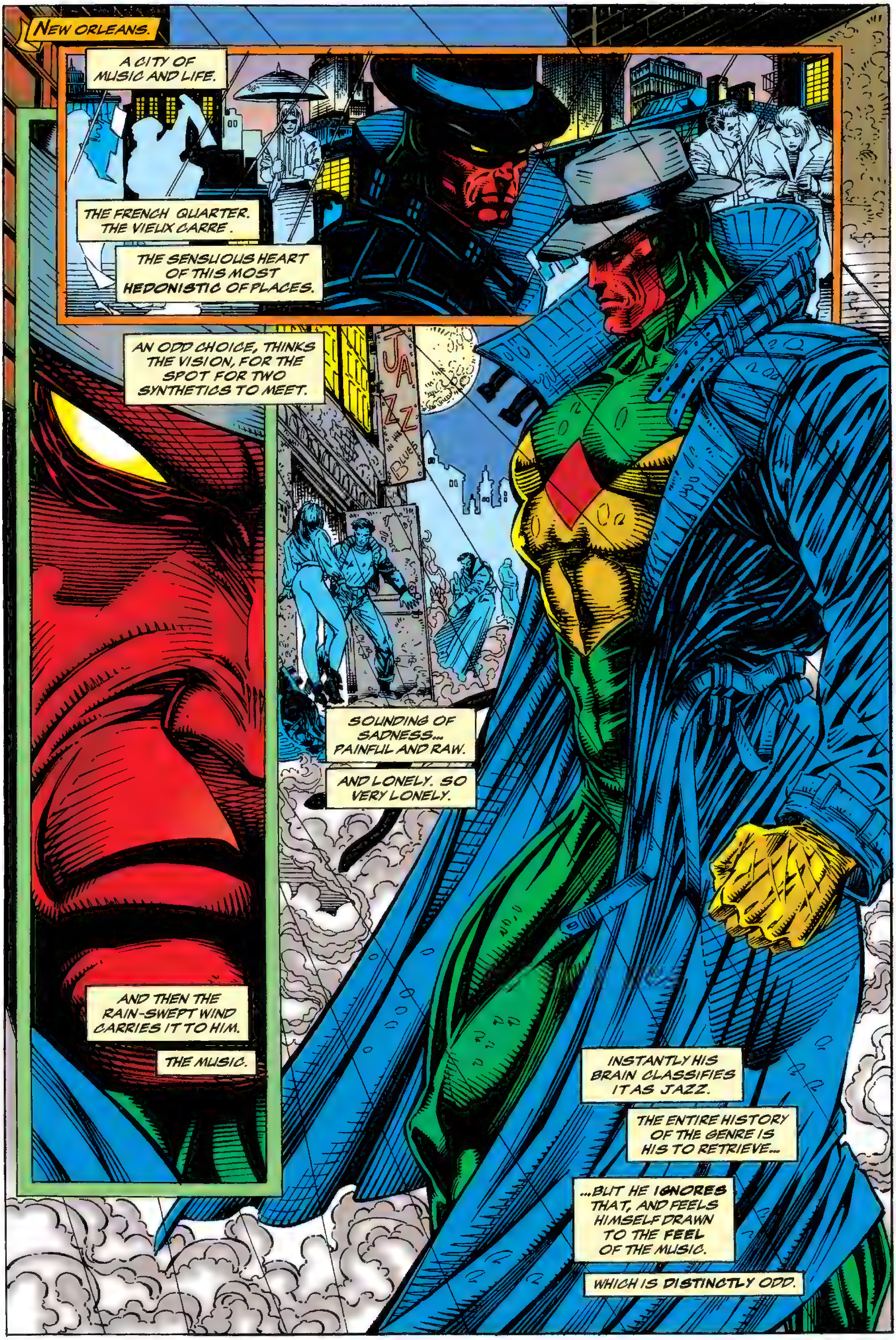

LET ME REPHRASE THAT. ALL SENTIENT ORGANIC BEINGS DREAM.
WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR DREAMS?
I HOPE I AM NOT BEING IMPOLITE.
NO. YOU'RE BEING INQUISITIVE.
LET'S SEE. I GUESS I DREAM OF HOME.
MY OLD FRIENDS IN THE REBELLION. MY TEACHERS.
I DREAM OF MY MOTHER AS WELL. BUT I'D CLASSIFY THOSE AS NIGHTMARES.
WHY?
I MERELY WISHED TO KNOW SINCE I HAVE NEVER HAD THE EXPERIENCE.
NEVER!?
NO. NEVER.
NOW COME, IT IS LATE. IT IS TIME WE WERE BACK AT--
"--AVENGERS MANSION."
WELL, I'M HITTING THE HAY. GOTTA GET UP EARLY.
CRYSTAL WANTS TO TAKE ME SHOPPING. SAYS IT'S TIME I STARTED DRESSING LIKE A TERRAN--LIKE SHE SHOULD TALK!
umm--YOU WANNA COME ALONG?
I THINK NOT.
MY KNOWLEDGE OF FEMALE APPAREL IS QUITE LIMITED. CRYSTAL IS FAR MORE EXPERT IN SUCH MATTERS.
GOOD NIGHT, DEATHCRY. SLEEP WELL.
YOU, TOO, VISH. I MEAN, I KNOW YOU DON'T--BUT IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS.

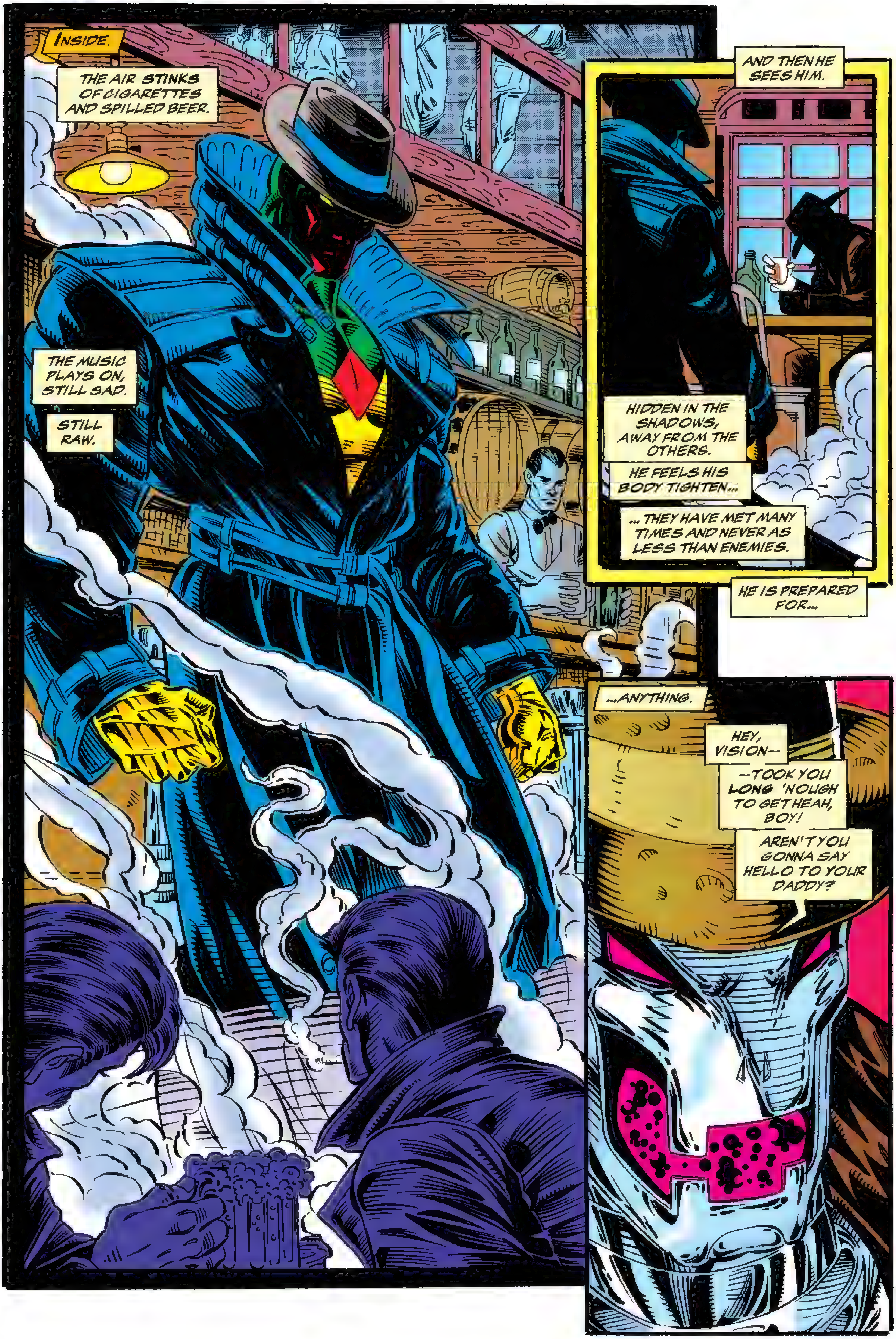

THE MANSION IS QUIET IN THE DARKLING HOURS BEFORE DAWN.
AND IN THESE SILENT HOURS, WHEN ALL OTHERS ARE ASLEEP--
--THERE IS ALWAYS ONE MAN THE VISION CAN TURN TO.
GOOD MORNING, JARVIS.
WHO TH--!?
OH, MASTER VISION! MY APOLOGIES, SIR. YOU STARTLED ME--
--I WAS QUITE ENGROSSED IN MY MORNING BISCUITS.
INDEED.
JARVIS, I AM SOMEWHAT CONCERNED.
WHY, SIR?
EARLIER TONIGHT, I LIED TO DEATHCRY.
I TOLD HER I HAVE NEVER DREAMED, WHEN IN POINT OF FACT I HAVE EXPERIENCED THE SENSATION ALL THIS WEEK.
SUCH BEHAVIOR IS UNLIKE ME.
I WOULDN'T WORRY, SIR. WE ALL LIKE TO KEEP THINGS TO OURSELVES. PRIVACY IS OUR LAST REFUGE, MOTHER ALWAYS SAID.
A WHITE LIE IS MERELY HUMAN...
...AS IS DRINKING TEA. I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN YOU IMBIBE, SIR!
I
NEVER
HAVE.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SIR?
IT WAS ONLY A LITTLE SIP, AFTER ALL.
AND QUITE FLAVORFUL AS WELL, JARVIS.
MY COMPLIMENTS.
STILL, I THINK AN APPOINTMENT WITH DR. PYM IS CALLED FOR.
VERY GOOD, SIR. I'LL INFORM DR. PYM IN THE MORNING. GOOD NIGHT, SIR.

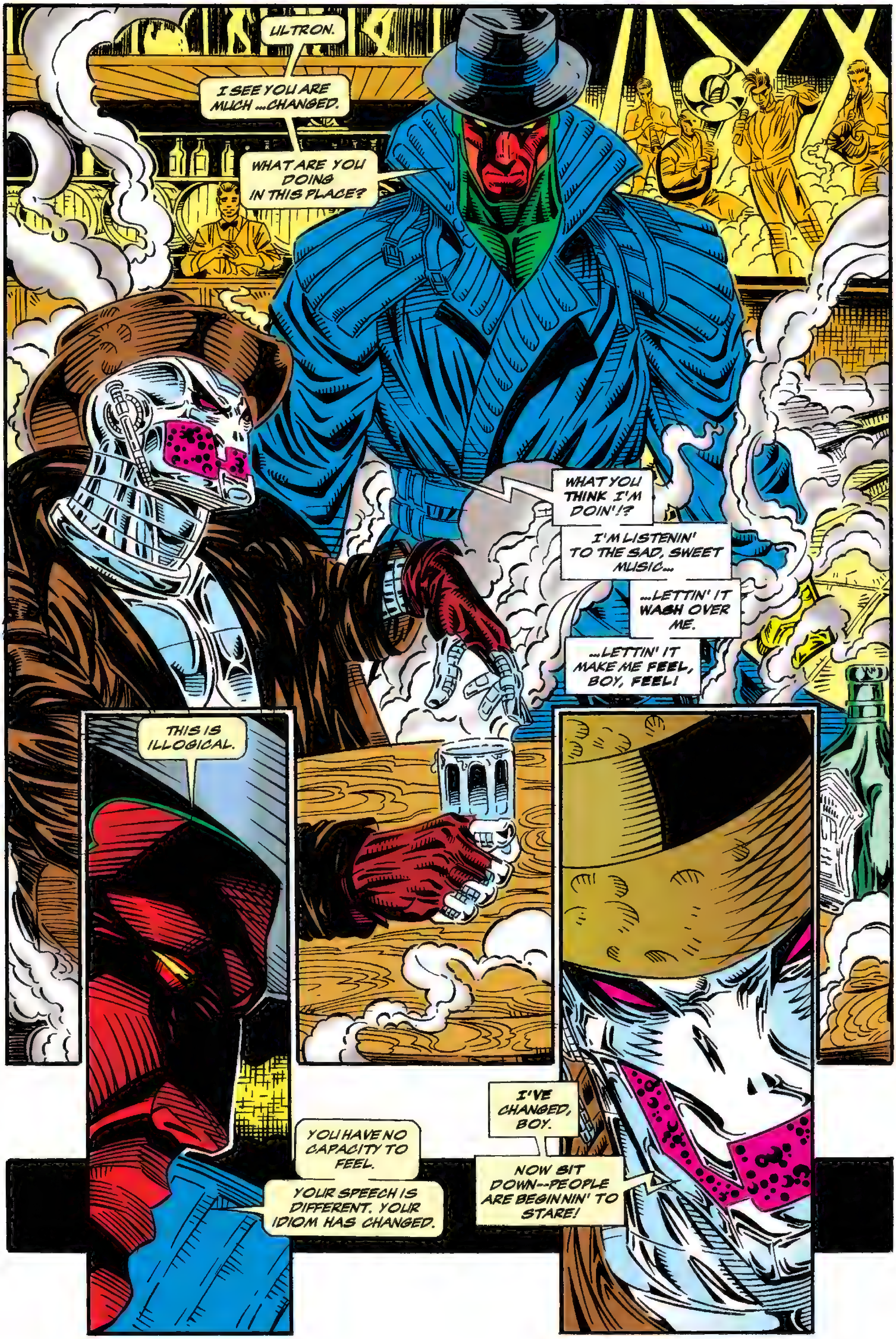

MORNING.
THE MANSION'S DIAGNOSTIC CHAMBER.
OKAY, COMPUTER, I'D LIKE A PROJECTION MODEL ON THE VISION'S ARTIFICIAL NEUROPHERIN SEQUENCES, PLUS A HOLOGRAPHIC WORK-UP ON HIS HIGHER LIMBIC SYSTEM...
...BY, OH, SAY--NOON. IS THAT GOOD FOR YOU?
AGREED. TERMINATE ELECTROENCEPH-ALOGRAPHIC SCAN?
YES, WE'VE DONE ENOUGH FOR ONE MORNING. THANK YOU.
THAT'S IT, VISION. YOU CAN STEP OUT NOW.
I REALIZE THIS MAY BE PREMATURE, HENRY, BUT HAVE YOU FOUND ANYTHING?
NOTHING CONCLUSIVE, BUT THEN I'M NOT SURE WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.
WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THIS ISN'T YOUR ORIGINAL BODY, VISION. YOUR BRAIN WAS TRANSPLANTED INTO THIS FORM MONTHS AGO...
...SO SOME TRAUMA, HOWEVER DELAYED, IS TO BE EXPECTED.
THERE IS EVIDENCE YOUR NEURAL COUPLINGS AREN'T QUITE IN ALIGNMENT, BUT ONLY BY A MICRO-FRACTION.
WHAT INTRIGUES ME ARE YOUR DREAMS.

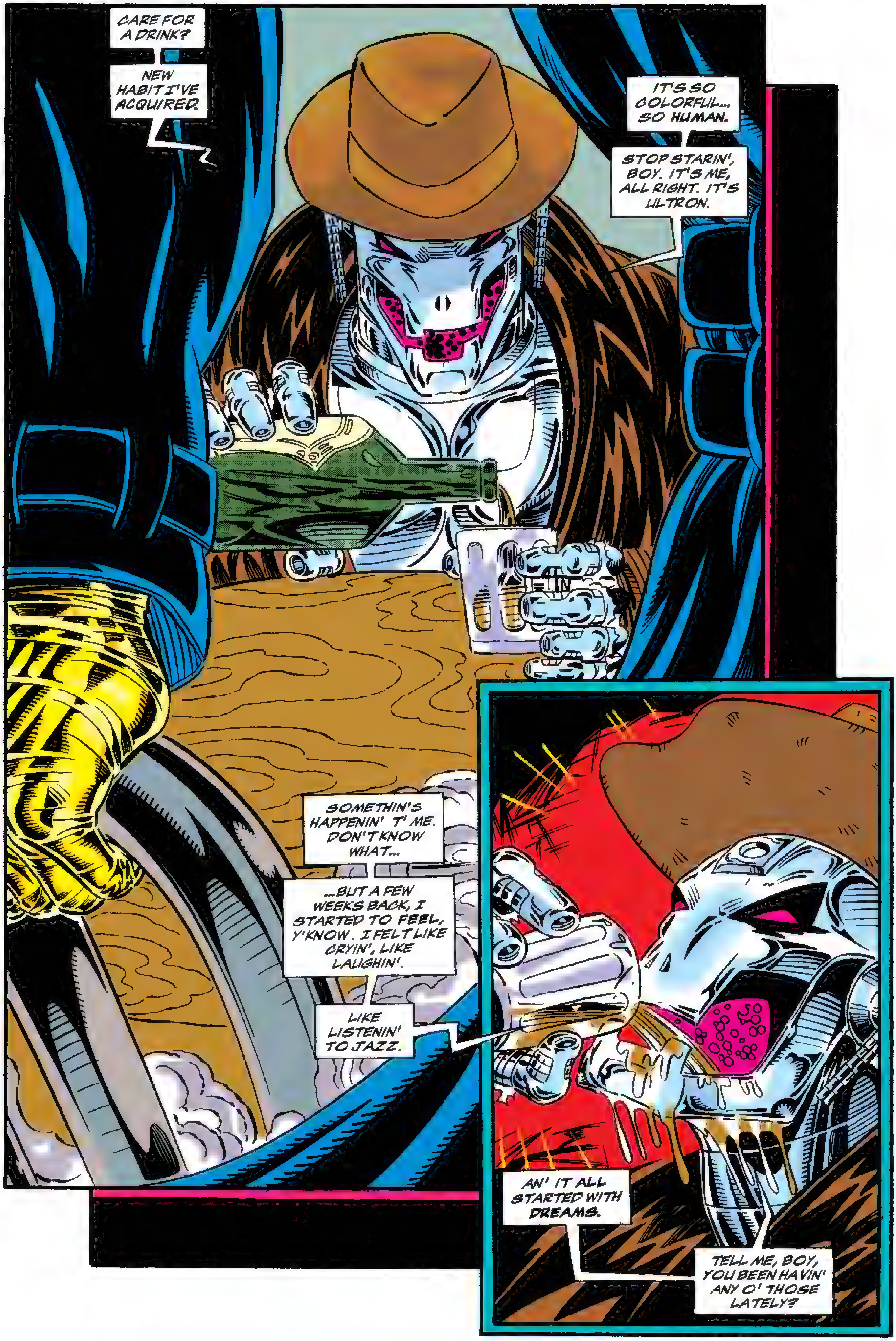

HENRY, I WAS RELUCTANT TO TELL YOU THEIR NATURE.
I ONLY DID SO IN ORDER TO HELP WITH YOUR DIAGNOSTIC.
VISION, YOU'RE TREATING THIS AS IF A *MACHINE* WERE MALFUNCTIONING...
...WHILE IT MAY VERY WELL BE A *MAN* REMEMBERING AND RE-ENGINEERING HIS PAST.
IT DOESN'T TAKE A *THERAPIST* TO SEE THE WOMAN IS *WANDA*, AND THE BOYS ARE--
AN INTERESTING THEORY, BUT ONE THAT DOES NOT HOLD UP UNDER SCRUTINY.
ANY EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT I HAD TO MY FORMER WIFE...
...AND FAMILY...
...ENDED DURING MY REPROGRAMMING WHEN MY EMOTION PROGRAM WAS DELETED FROM MY PERSONA CORE.
VISION, *ULTRON* BUILT YOU BETTER THAN *THAT*.
YOU HAVE BACK-UP SYSTEMS TO YOUR BACK-UP SYSTEMS! I'VE *ALWAYS* THOUGHT YOU COULD FEEL EMOTIONS AGAIN IF YOU ACCESSED THOSE SYSTEMS...
...PERHAPS THESE DREAMS ARE A *SUBCONSCIOUS* WAY OF DOING JUST THAT.
THANK YOU, HENRY. IF THAT IS ALL FOR TODAY?
VISION!?
MY DAYS OF FEELING EMOTION ARE PAST.
AND IN RECALLING THE EVENTS OF THAT ERA IN MY LIFE, I FEEL THAT PERHAPS THAT LOSS IS FOR THE BEST.


HE FLIES LONG AND FAR...
...INTO THE DAY AND LONG PAST THE NIGHT.
HE WONDERS WHY HE DID NOT TELL HENRY PYM OF THE BEACON CALL HE HEARD IN THE MIDST OF THEIR CONVERSATION.
IS THAT WHY HE LEFT SO ABRUPTLY--TO SEEK OUT THE CALL'S SOURCE? A COMFORTING THOUGHT.
OR DID HE LEAVE BECAUSE OF THE MEMORIES PYM BROUGHT BACK--OF ANOTHER TIME WHEN THE VISION HAD BEEN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT TYPE OF BEING?
AN ILLOGICAL THOUGHT. WHY FLEE MEMORIES? THEY ARE PHANTOMS OF THINGS THAT WERE.
AND PHANTOMS CANNOT HURT.
HE COMES TO REST HERE, HOURS LATER, IN THIS SOUTHERN CITY...
...THE SIGNAL CAME FROM HERE.
HE KNOWS WHO SENT IT.
THE MYSTERY OF THE DREAMS SEEMS TO BE ANSWERED.
OF COURSE. IT HAD TO BE. HIM.

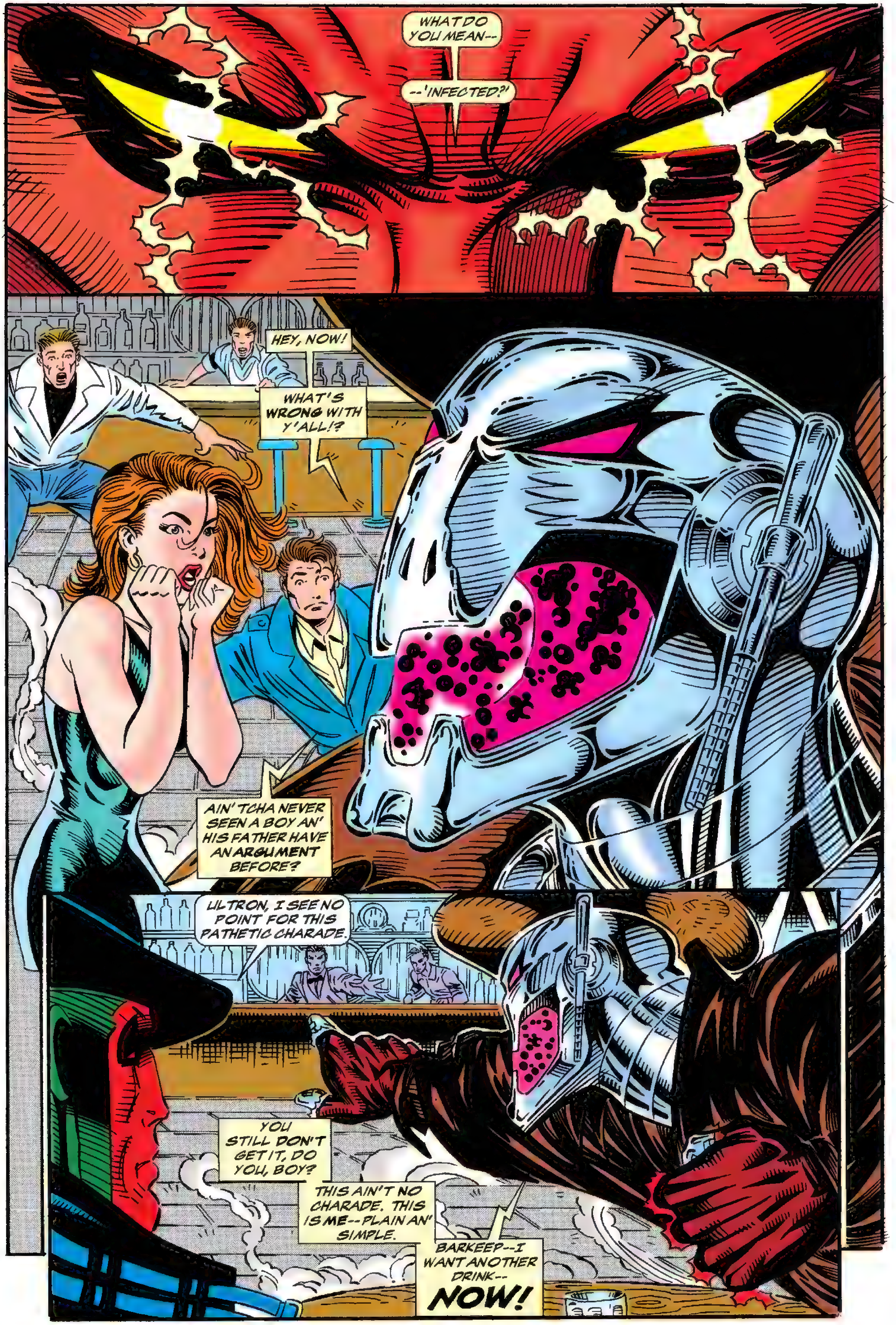

NEW ORLEANS.
A CITY OF MUSIC AND LIFE.
THE FRENCH QUARTER. THE VIEUX CARRE.
THE SENSUOUS HEART OF THIS MOST HEDONISTIC OF PLACES.
AN ODD CHOICE, THINKS THE VISION, FOR THE SPOT FOR TWO SYNTHETICS TO MEET.
JAZZ IN THE BLUES
SOUNDING OF SADNESS... PAINFUL AND RAW.
AND LONELY. SO VERY LONELY.
AND THEN THE RAIN-SWEPT WIND CARRIES IT TO HIM.
THE MUSIC.
INSTANTLY HIS BRAIN CLASSIFIES IT AS JAZZ.
THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE GENRE IS HIS TO RETRIEVE...
...BUT HE IGNORES THAT, AND FEELS HIMSELF DRAWN TO THE FEEL OF THE MUSIC.
WHICH IS DISTINCTLY ODD.


INSIDE.
THE AIR STINKS OF CIGARETTES AND SPILLED BEER.
THE MUSIC PLAYS ON, STILL SAD.
STILL RAW.
AND THEN HE SEES HIM.
HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS, AWAY FROM THE OTHERS.
HE FEELS HIS BODY TIGHTEN...
...THEY HAVE MET MANY TIMES AND NEVER AS LESS THAN ENEMIES.
HE IS PREPARED FOR...
...ANYTHING.
HEY, VISION--
--TOOK YOU LONG 'NOUGH TO GET HEAH, BOY!
AREN'T YOU GONNA SAY HELLO TO YOUR DADDY?

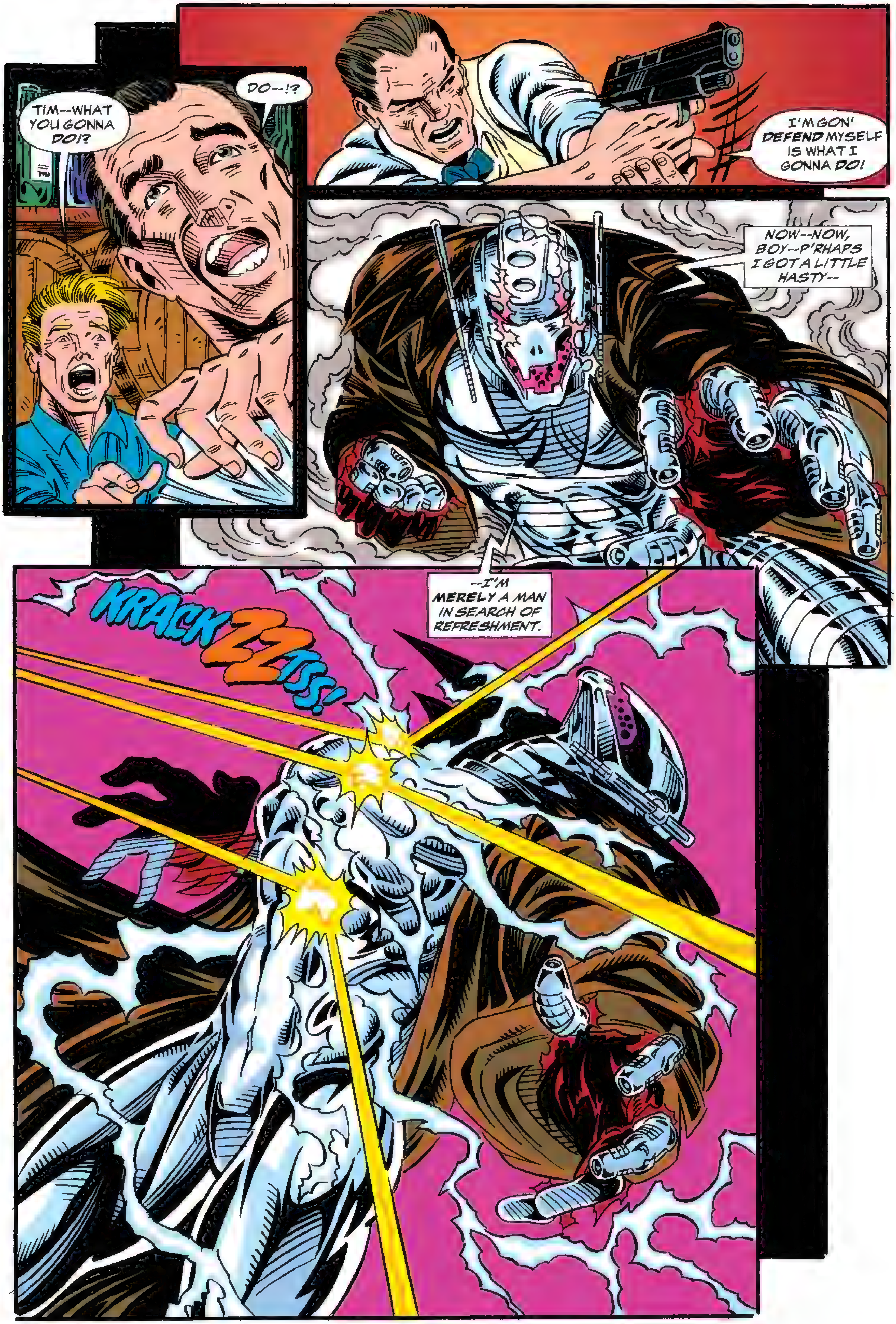

ULTRON.
I SEE YOU ARE MUCH ...CHANGED.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THIS PLACE?
WHAT YOU THINK I'M DOIN'!?
I'M LISTENIN' TO THE SAD, SWEET MUSIC...
...LETTIN' IT WASH OVER ME.
...LETTIN' IT MAKE ME FEEL, BOY, FEEL!
THIS IS ILLOGICAL.
YOU HAVE NO CAPACITY TO FEEL.
YOUR SPEECH IS DIFFERENT. YOUR IDIOM HAS CHANGED.
I'VE CHANGED, BOY.
NOW SIT DOWN--PEOPLE ARE BEGINNIN' TO STARE!

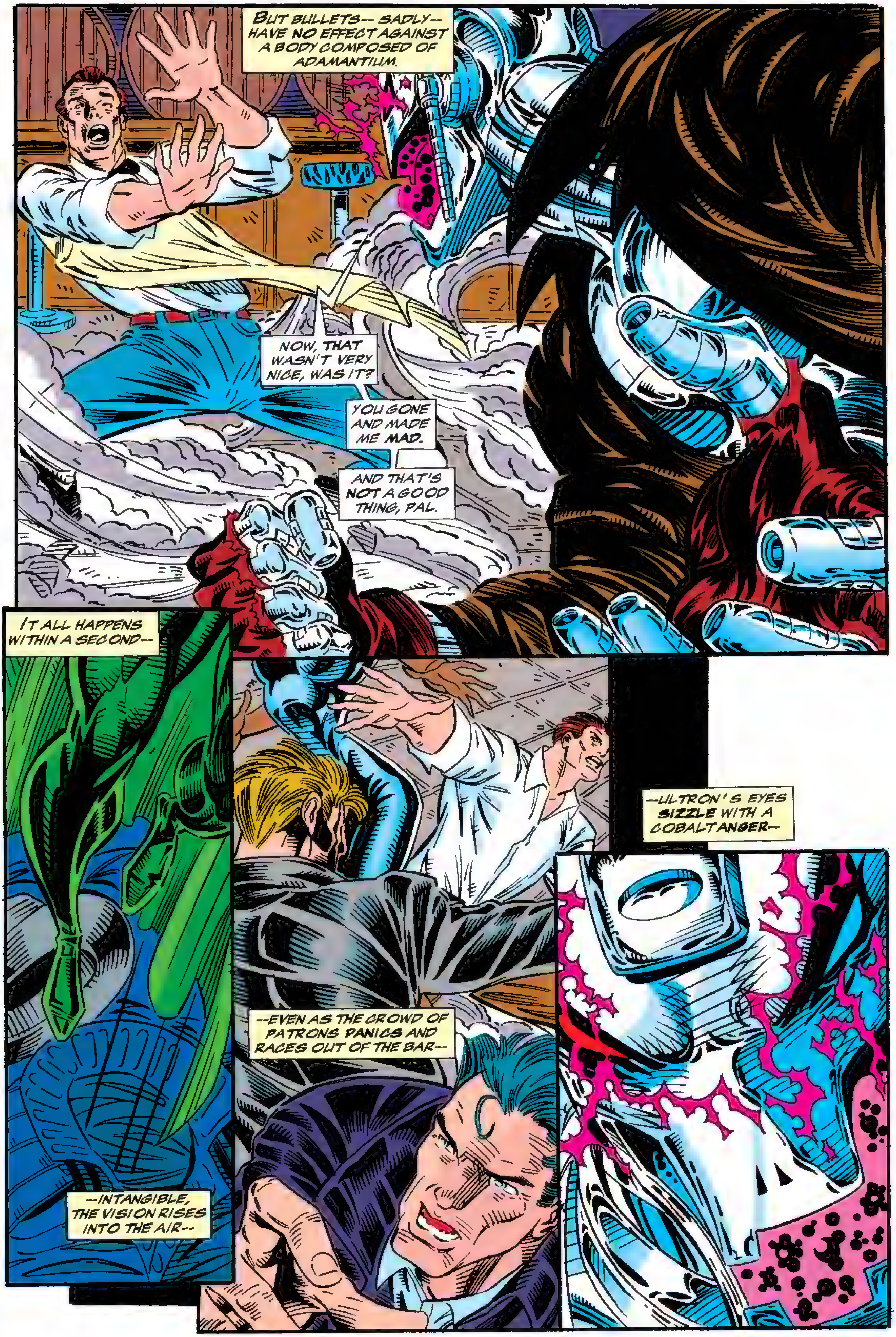

CARE FOR A DRINK?
NEW HABIT I'VE ACQUIRED.
IT'S SO COLORFUL... SO HUMAN.
STOP STARIN', BOY. IT'S ME, ALL RIGHT. IT'S ULTRON.
SOMETHIN'S HAPPENIN' T' ME. DON'T KNOW WHAT...
...BUT A FEW WEEKS BACK, I STARTED TO FEEL, Y'KNOW. I FELT LIKE CRYIN', LIKE LAUGHIN'.
LIKE LISTENIN' TO JAZZ.
AN' IT ALL STARTED WITH DREAMS.
TELL ME, BOY, YOU BEEN HAVIN' ANY O' THOSE LATELY?

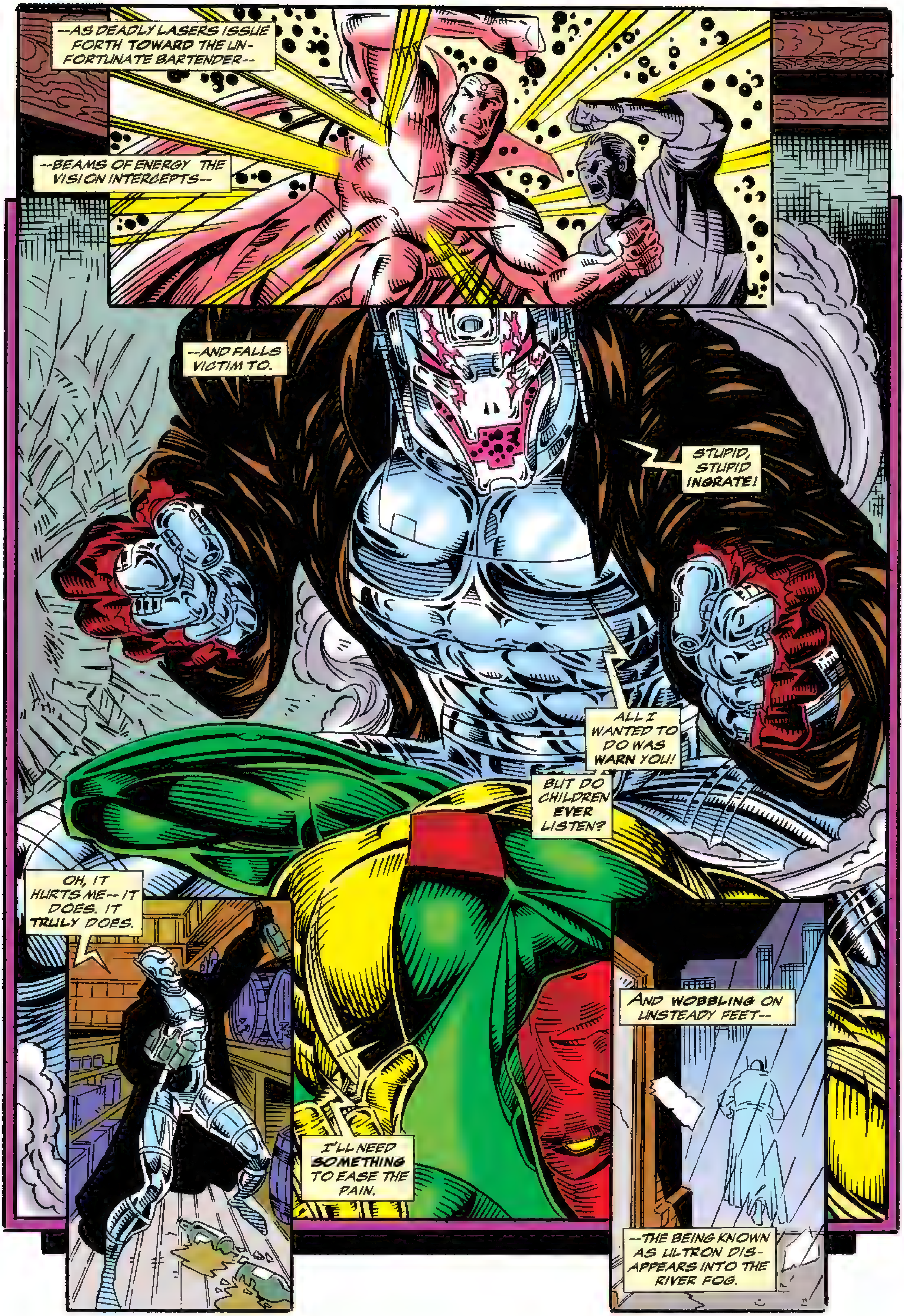
DON'T MOCK ME, ULTRON!
YOU ARE DOING THIS TO ME. ADMIT IT!
SWAAP!
CRASH!
IN THE SILENCE AFTERWARDS, THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH A HARSH, UNEARTHLY SOUND...
...THE SOUND OF ULTRON LAUGHING.
PRETTY HOT-HEADED OF YOU, EH, SON?
YOU ALMOST GOT ANGRY WITH ME.
YOU HAVE HAD DREAMS. YOU'RE GOING THROUGH THE FIRST PHASE. THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU... TO SEE IF YOU WERE INFECTED, AND SO YOU ARE!
BUT I HAVE NOTHIN' TO DO WITH IT. OH, BLESS ME, NO.

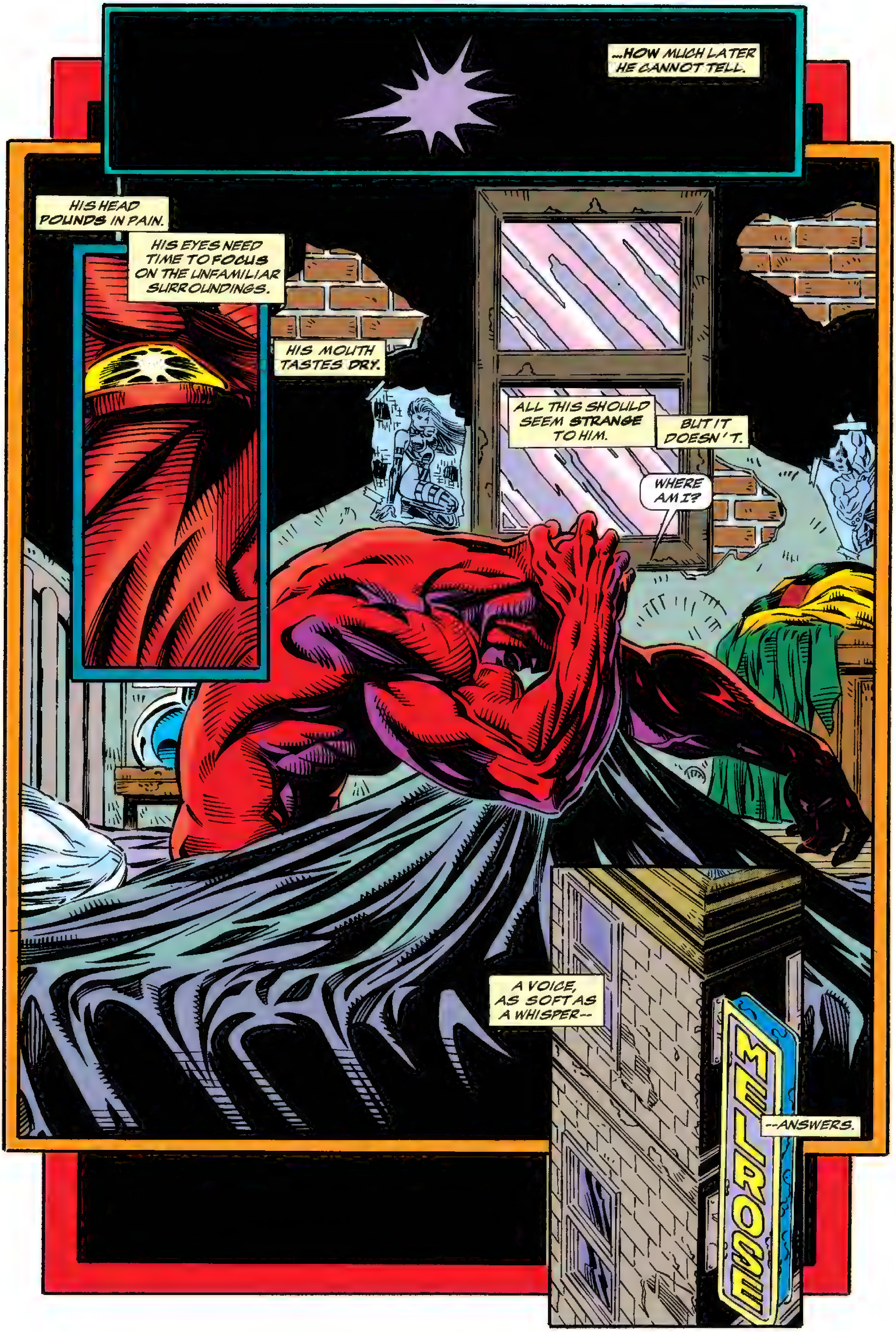

WHAT DO YOU MEAN--
--'INFECTED?'
HEY, NOW!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH Y'ALL!?
AIN'TCHA NEVER SEEN A BOY AN' HIS FATHER HAVE AN ARGUMENT BEFORE?
ULTRON, I SEE NO POINT FOR THIS PATHETIC CHARADE.
YOU STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU, BOY?
THIS AIN'T NO CHARADE. THIS IS ME--PLAIN AN' SIMPLE.
BARKEEP--I WANT ANOTHER DRINK--
NOW!

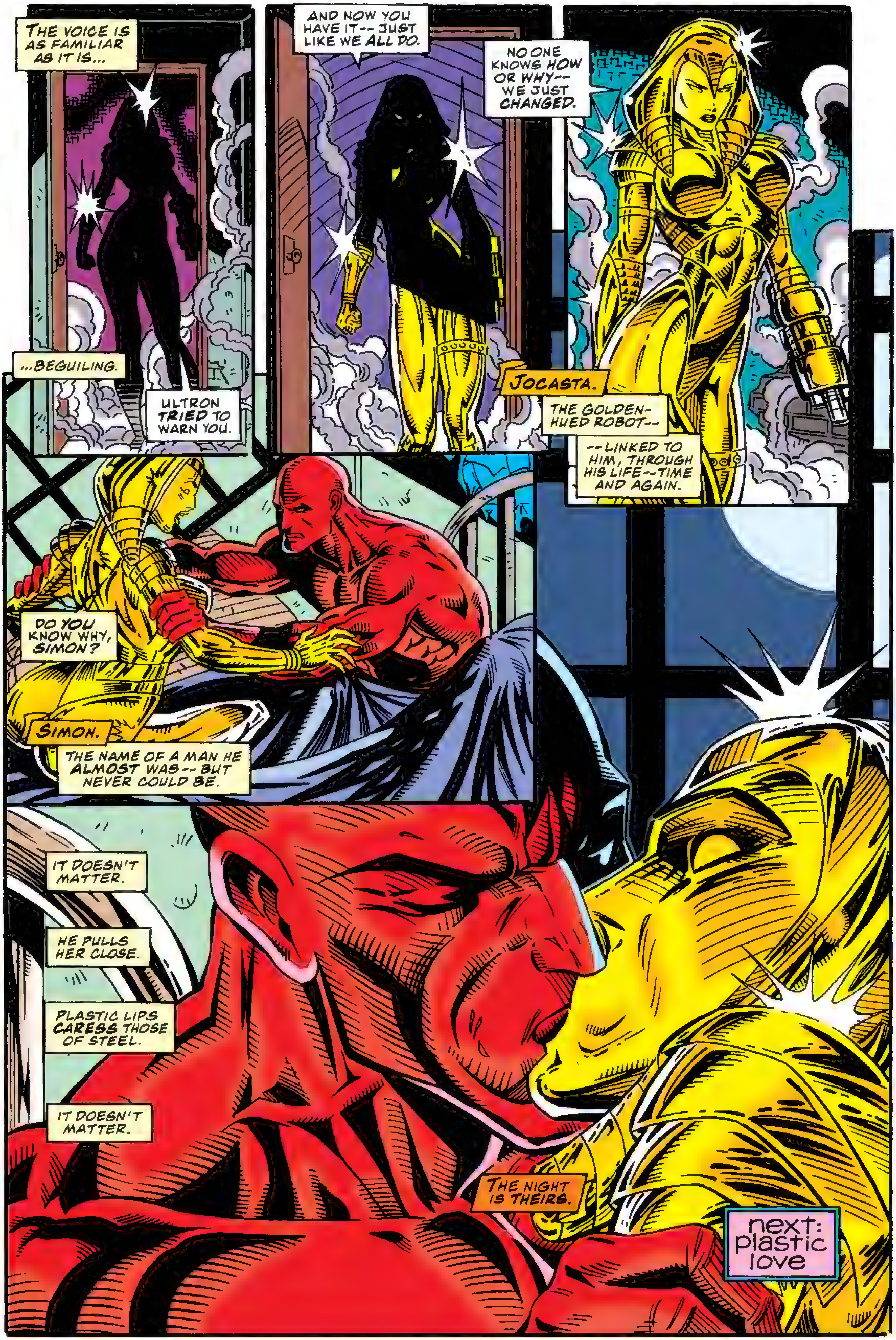
W--WHAT IN PITY'S NAME ARE YOU?
AN OLD MAN WITH A MIGHTY THIRST, MY FRIEND--
--NOW GIVE ME A DRINK OR DO THINGS HAVE T' GET NASTY?
FASCINATING.
YOU ARE EXHIBITING ALL THE SIGNS OF AN INEBRIATED HUMAN--
--AND YOU HAVE, RATHER FOOLISHLY, REVEALED OUR TRUE NATURE TO THE HUMANS.
WELL, I AM A FOOL NOW, VISION. DON'T YOU SEE?
THIS IS WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO YOU. ALL THE HUMAN EMOTION THAT'S BEEN DENIED YOU IS GONNA COME RUSHIN' IN LIKE THE TIDE.
AN' IT'S GONNA OVERWHELM YOU, BOY-- 'CUZ MACHINES LIKE YOU AN' ME WEREN'T MEANT TO HANDLE THIS STUFF!
NOW-- WHERE'S MY DRINK!?


TIM--WHAT YOU GONNA DO!?
DO--!?
I'M GON' DEFEND MYSELF IS WHAT I GONNA DO!
NOW--NOW, BOY--P'RHAPS I GOT A LITTLE HASTY--
--I'M MERELY A MAN IN SEARCH OF REFRESHMENT.
KRACKZZTSS!


BUT BULLETS-- SADLY-- HAVE NO EFFECT AGAINST A BODY COMPOSED OF ADAMANTIUM.
NOW, THAT WASN'T VERY NICE, WAS IT?
YOU GONE AND MADE ME MAD.
AND THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING, PAL.
IT ALL HAPPENS WITHIN A SECOND--
--INTANGIBLE, THE VISION RISES INTO THE AIR--
--EVEN AS THE CROWD OF PATRONS PANICS AND RACES OUT OF THE BAR--
--ULTRON'S EYES SIZZLE WITH A COBALT ANGER--

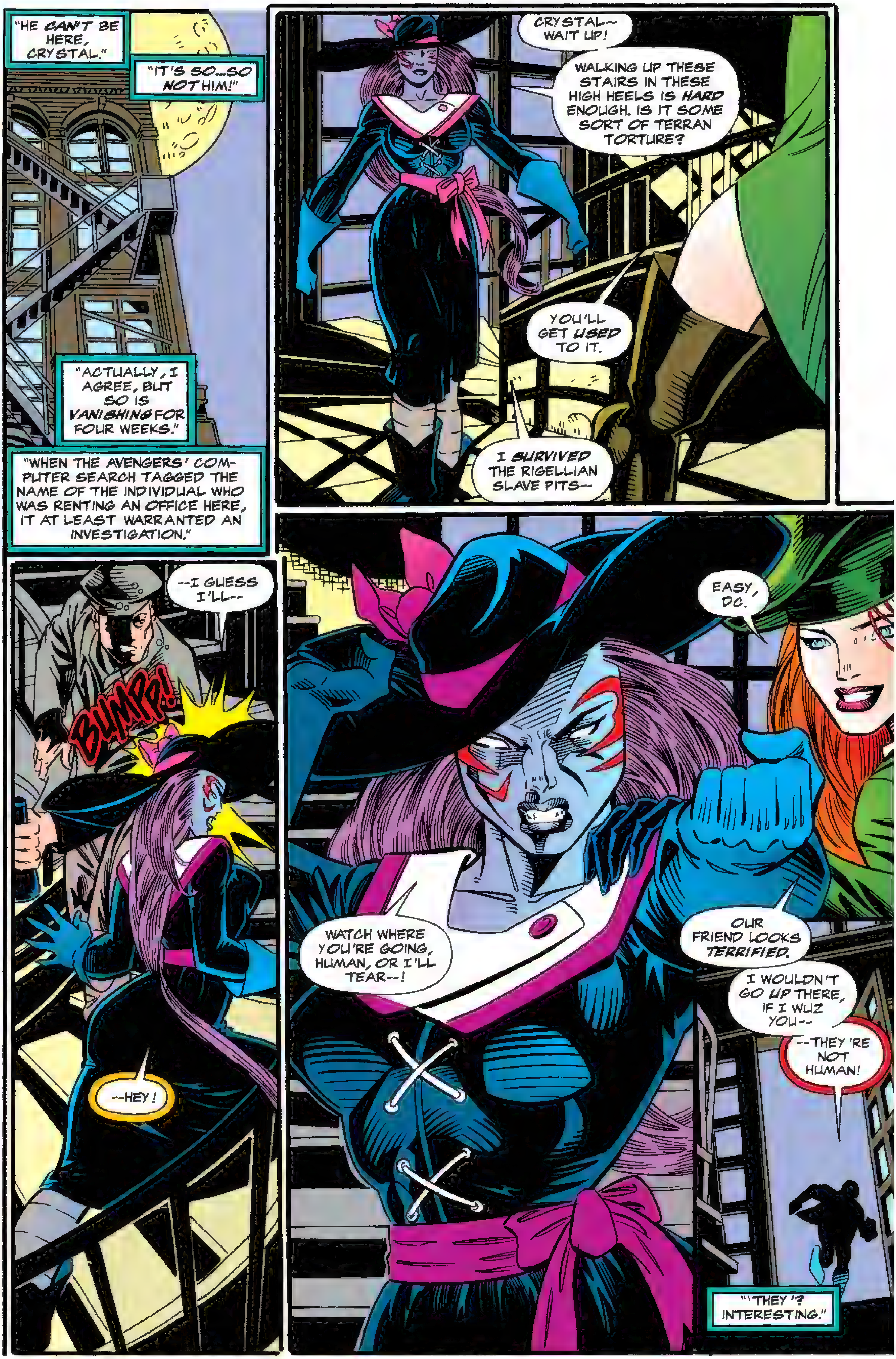

--AS DEADLY LASERS ISSUE FORTH TOWARD THE UNFORTUNATE BARTENDER--
--BEAMS OF ENERGY THE VISION INTERCEPTS--
--AND FALLS VICTIM TO.
STUPID, STUPID INGRATE!
ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS WARN YOU!
BUT DO CHILDREN **EVER** LISTEN?
OH, IT HURTS ME-- IT DOES. IT **TRULY** DOES.
I'LL NEED **SOMETHING** TO EASE THE PAIN.
AND WOBBLING ON UNSTEADY FEET--
--THE BEING KNOWN AS ULTRON DISAPPEARS INTO THE RIVER FOG.


...HOW MUCH LATER HE CANNOT TELL.
HIS HEAD POUNDS IN PAIN.
HIS EYES NEED TIME TO FOCUS ON THE UNFAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS.
HIS MOUTH TASTES DRY.
ALL THIS SHOULD SEEM STRANGE TO HIM.
BUT IT DOESN'T.
WHERE AM I?
A VOICE, AS SOFT AS A WHISPER--
MELROSE
--ANSWERS.

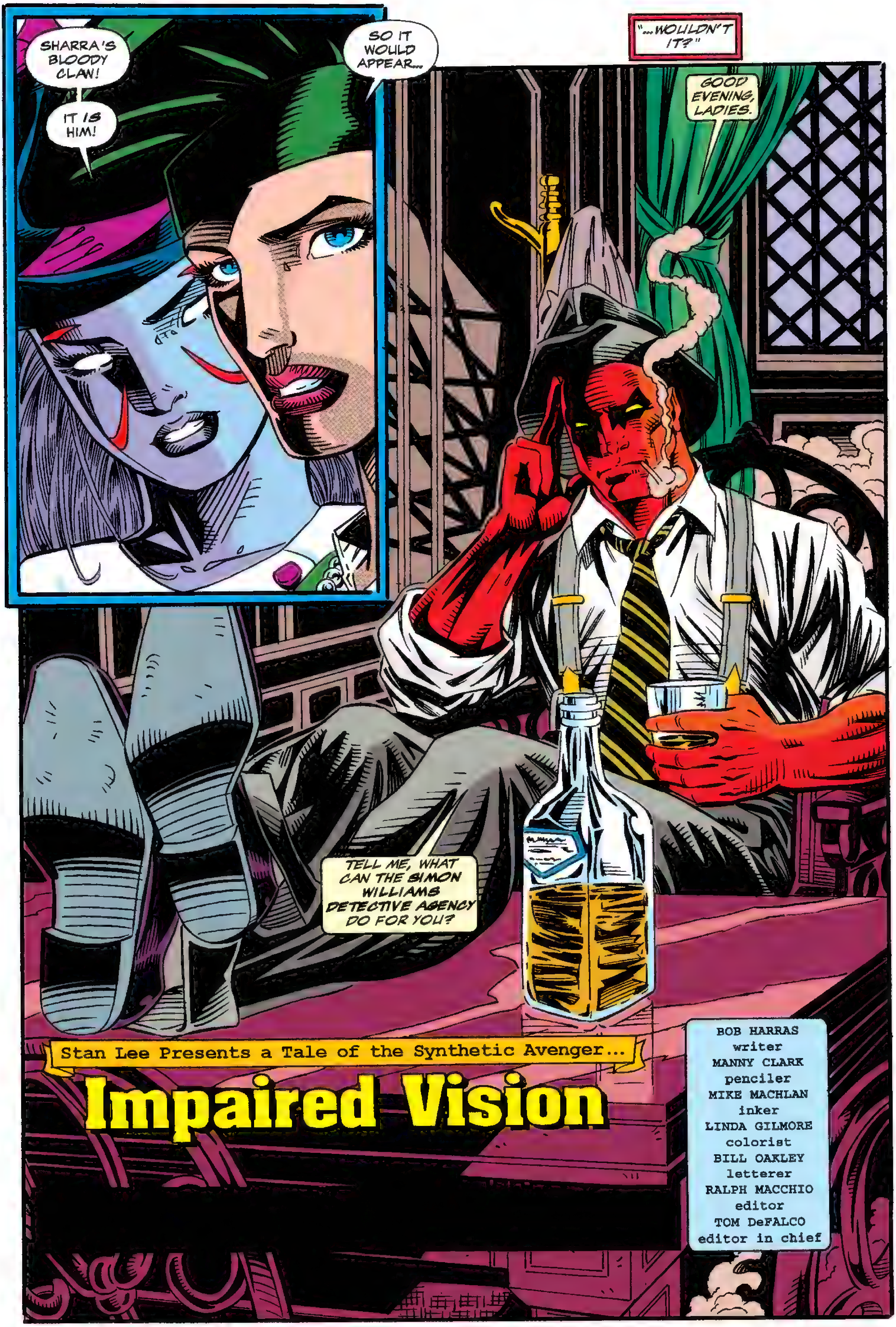

THE VOICE IS AS FAMILIAR AS IT IS...
...BEGUILING.
ULTRON TRIED TO WARN YOU.
AND NOW YOU HAVE IT-- JUST LIKE WE ALL DO.
NO ONE KNOWS HOW OR WHY-- WE JUST CHANGED.
JOCASTA.
THE GOLDEN-HUED ROBOT--
--LINKED TO HIM, THROUGH HIS LIFE--TIME AND AGAIN.
DO YOU KNOW WHY, SIMON?
SIMON.
THE NAME OF A MAN HE ALMOST WAS-- BUT NEVER COULD BE.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
HE PULLS HER CLOSE.
PLASTIC LIPS CARESS THOSE OF STEEL.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
THE NIGHT IS THEIRS.
next: plastic love

MARVEL COMICS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE VISION
DEC
CHAPTER TWO
MACCH
RBY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS...
...THE WINDY CITY.
I LOOK RIDICULOUS!
DEATHCRY, YOU WANTED TO GO ON THIS MISSION. YOU PRACTICALLY BEGGED TO COME ALONG--
--YOU KNEW IT INVOLVED GOING UNDERCOVER--
--SO, PLEASE, NO MORE COMPLAINTS, ALL RIGHT?
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!
BUT, COME ON, CRYSTAL--
--EVEN YOU HAVE TO ADMIT I LOOK LIKE A SKRULLIAN BAR MAID ON A REALLY BAD HAIR DAY IN THIS OUTFIT! IF MY MOTHER COULD SEE ME NOW--
WELL, SHE CAN'T... THANKFULLY.
WE'VE COME HERE TO FIND A MISSING FRIEND, DC--
--AND, AND IF THE FATES ARE KIND, TONIGHT WE WILL...
...IN THAT BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET.


"HE *CAN'T* BE HERE, CRYSTAL."
"IT'S SO...SO *NOT* HIM!"
"ACTUALLY, I AGREE, BUT SO IS *VANISHING* FOR FOUR WEEKS."
"WHEN THE AVENGERS' COMPUTER SEARCH TAGGED THE NAME OF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS RENTING AN OFFICE HERE, IT AT LEAST WARRANTED AN INVESTIGATION."
CRYSTAL-- WAIT UP!
WALKING UP THESE STAIRS IN THESE HIGH HEELS IS *HARD* ENOUGH. IS IT SOME SORT OF TERRAN TORTURE?
YOU'LL GET *USED* TO IT.
I *SURVIVED* THE RIGELLIAN SLAVE PITS--
--I GUESS I'LL--
BUMP!
--HEY!
EASY, DC.
WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, HUMAN, OR I'LL TEAR--!
OUR FRIEND LOOKS *TERRIFIED.*
I WOULDN'T GO *UP* THERE, IF I WUZ YOU--
--THEY'RE NOT HUMAN!
"'THEY'? INTERESTING."

AND, AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS...
RANDAK'S BONES! JOCASTA!?
NOW, I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING!
WHASSA-MATTER WITH YOU TWO?
AIN'T YOU NEVER SEEN A LADY DRYIN' HER NAILS BEFORE?
NO--
--I MEAN, YES. I MEAN...
WHATEVER, DOLL. YOU TWO GOT AN APPOINTMENT? 'CUZ NO ONE GETS IN WIT-OUT ONE!
THIS IS ABSURD! SHE'S A ROBO--
THAT'S ENOUGH, DC.
WE REALLY DO NEED TO SEE YOUR BOSS. IT'S A MISSING PERSONS CASE, AND WE'RE PREPARED TO PAY--
--ER--
--BIG BUCKS.
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?
ANYWAY, YOU'VE STAYED LONGER THAN MOST PEOPLE--
"--SO, G'ON IN. HE'S NOT BUSY."
SIMON WILLIAMS PRIVATE DETECTIVE
"IT'S NOT LIKE BUSINESS IS BOOMING OR ANYTHING."


SHARRA'S BLOODY CLAN!
IT IS HIM!
SO IT WOULD APPEAR...
"...WOULDN'T IT?"
GOOD EVENING, LADIES.
TELL ME, WHAT CAN THE SIMON WILLIAMS DETECTIVE AGENCY DO FOR YOU?

Stan Lee Presents a Tale of the Synthetic Avenger...

Impaired Vision

[redacted]

BOB HARRAS
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MANNY CLARK
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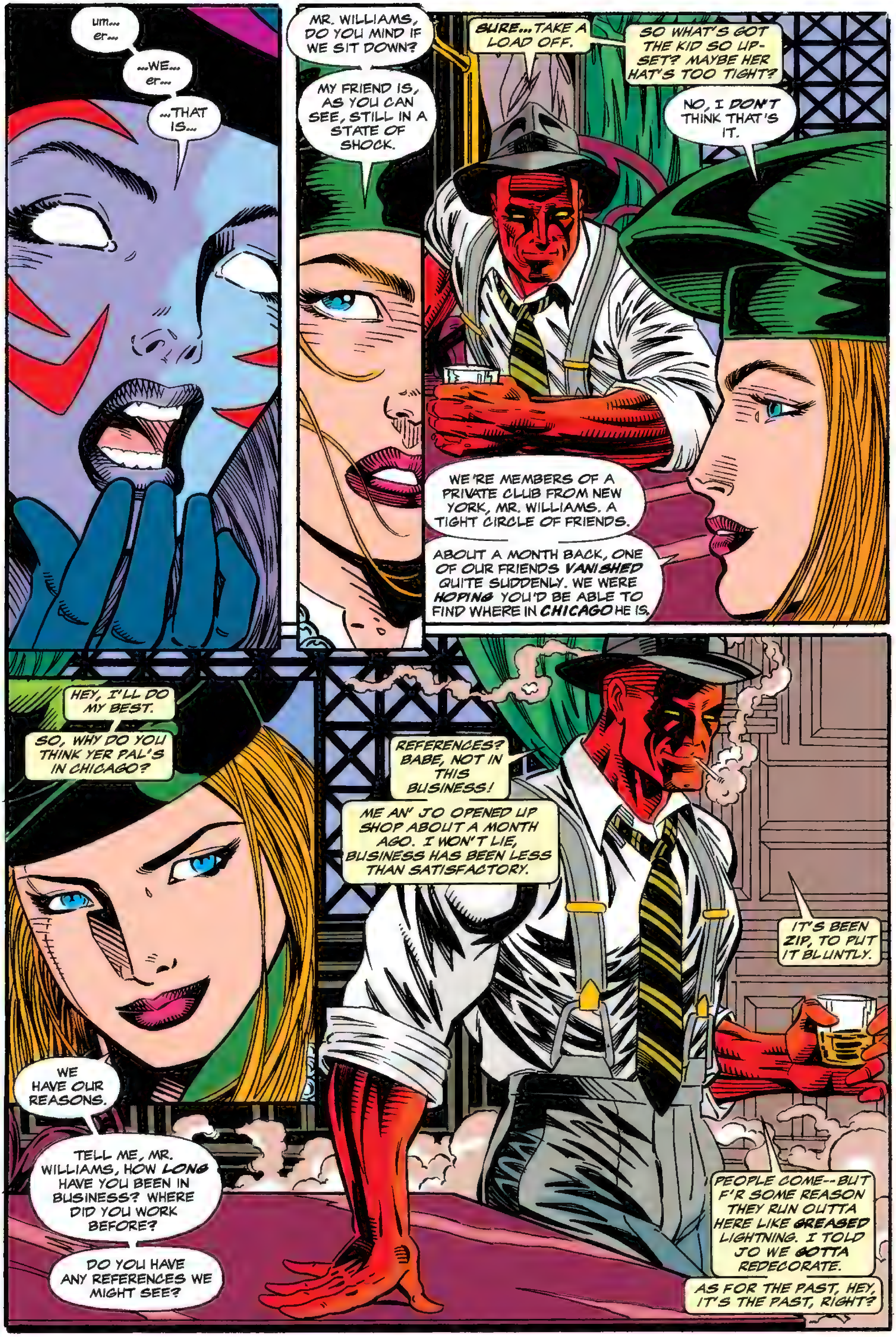
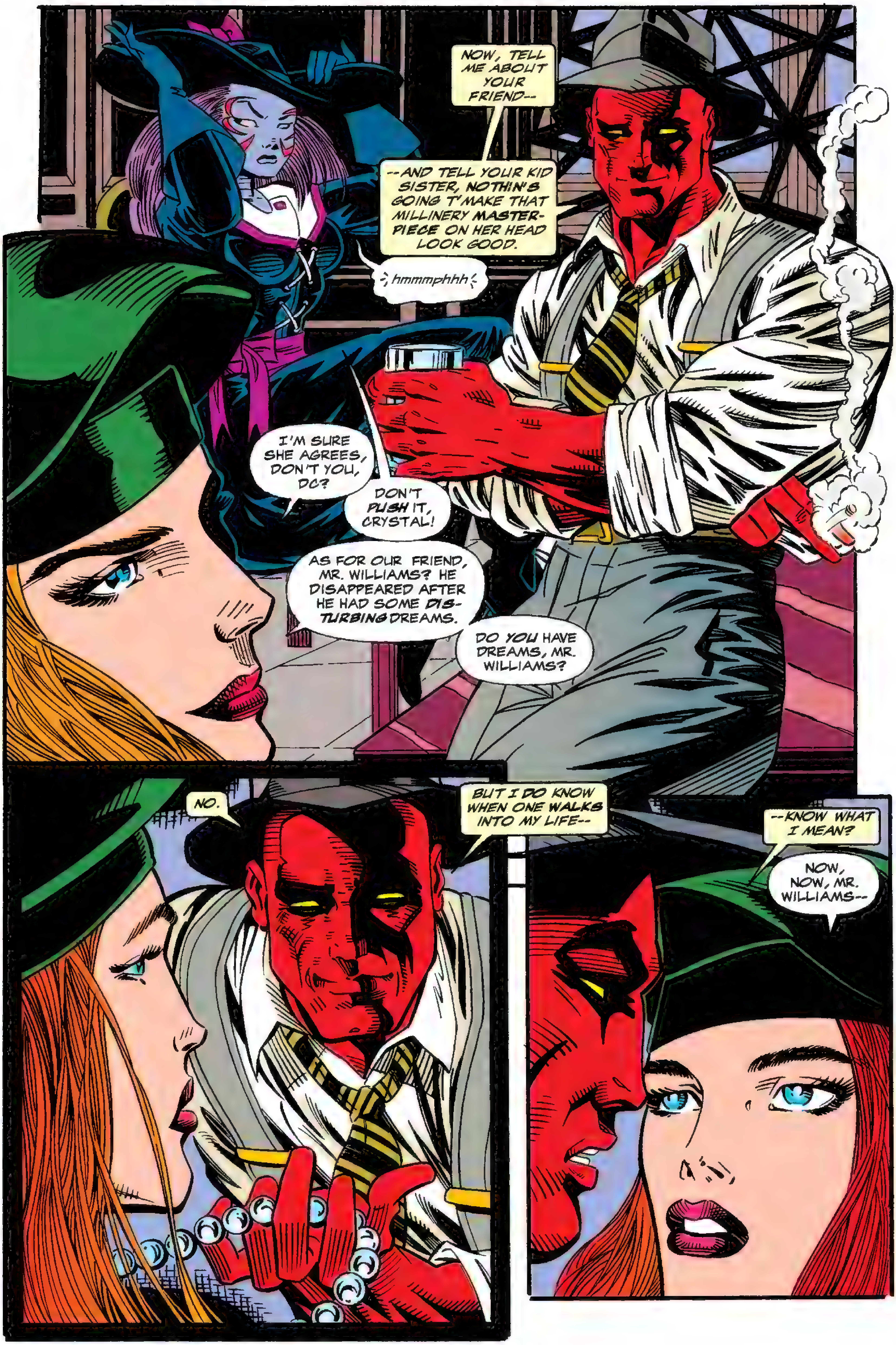
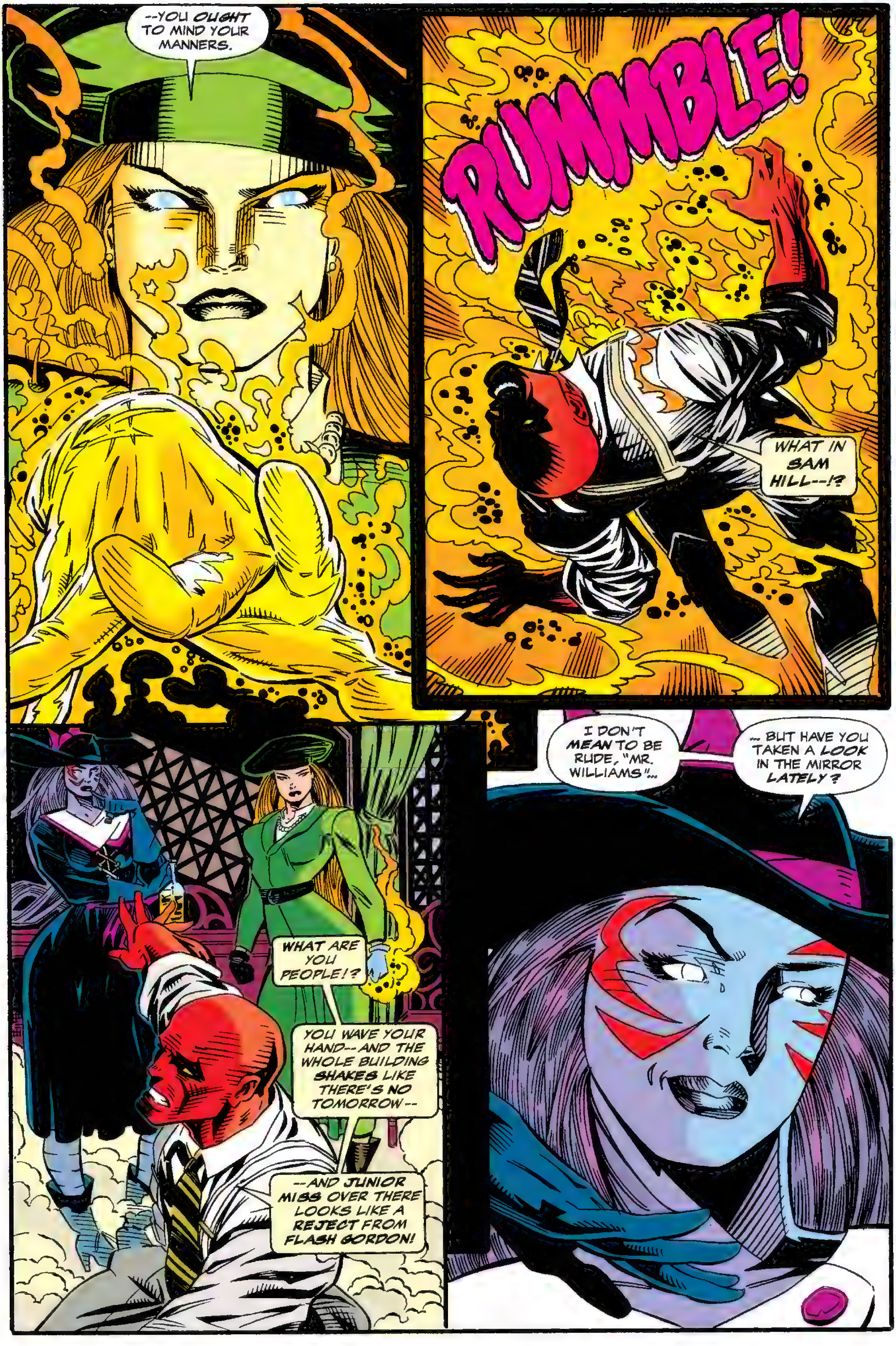
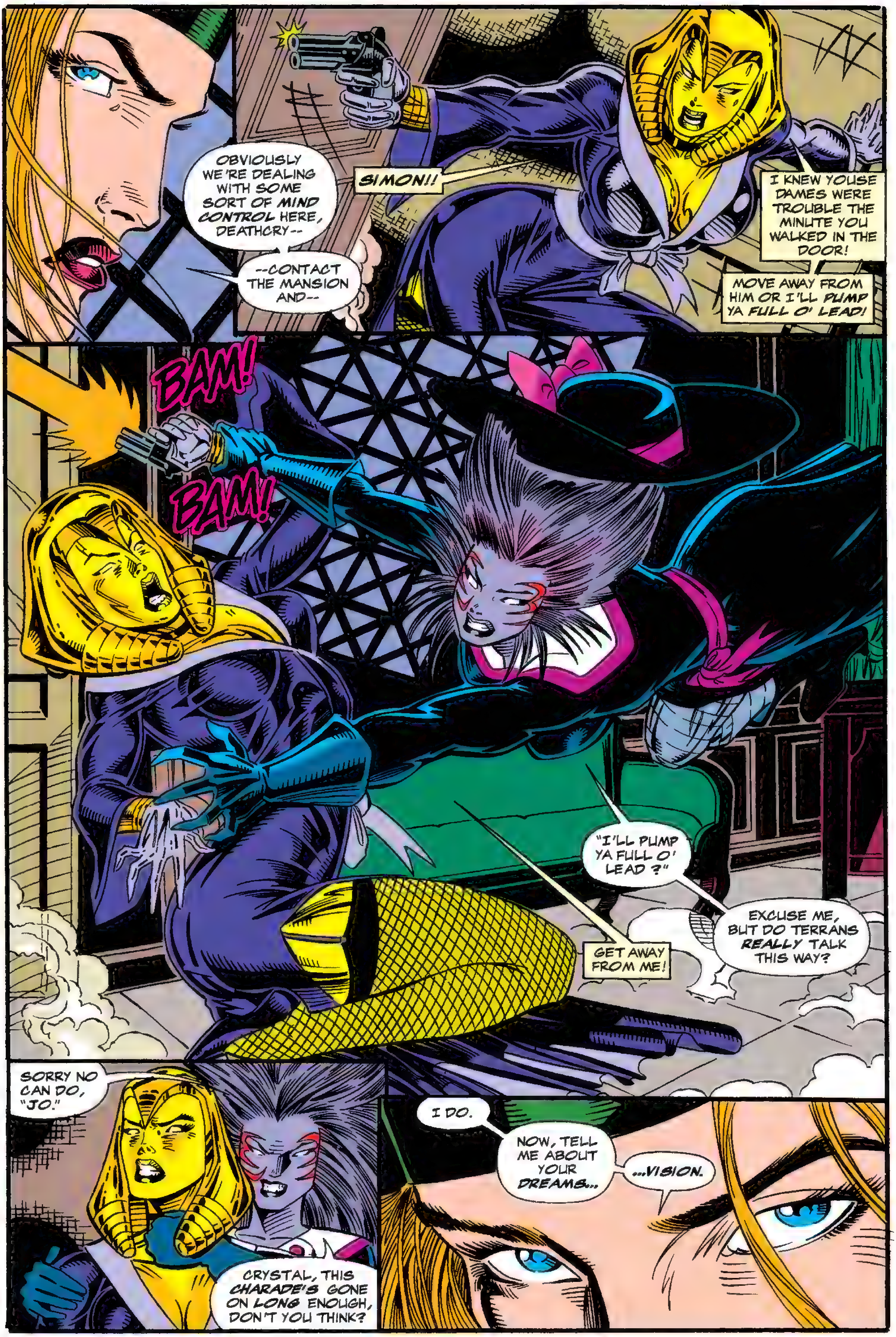
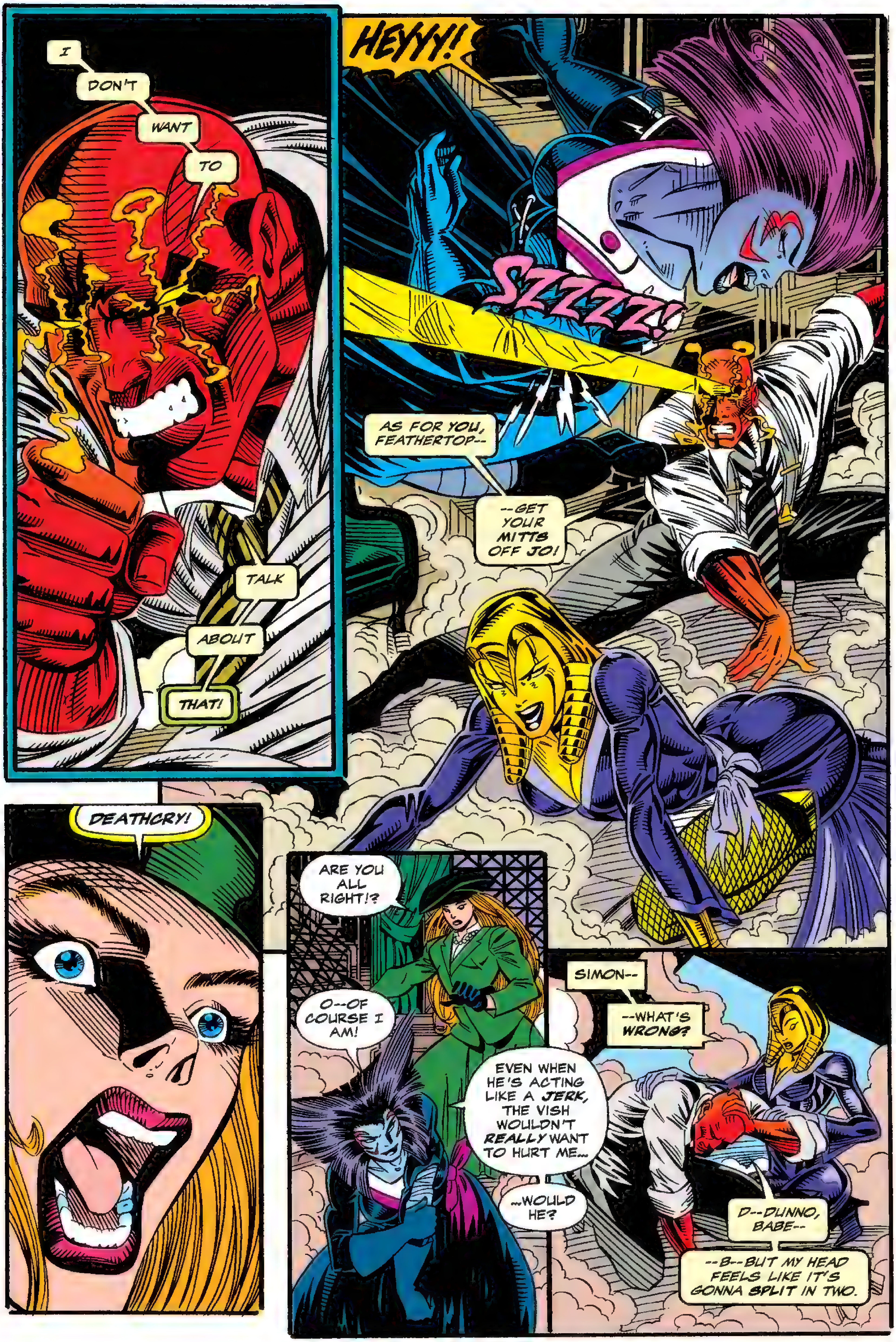

um... er...
...WE... er...
...THAT IS...
MR. WILLIAMS, DO YOU MIND IF WE SIT DOWN?
MY FRIEND IS, AS YOU CAN SEE, STILL IN A STATE OF SHOCK.
SURE...TAKE A LOAD OFF.
SO WHAT'S GOT THE KID SO UPSET? MAYBE HER HAT'S TOO TIGHT?
NO, I DON'T THINK THAT'S IT.
WE'RE MEMBERS OF A PRIVATE CLUB FROM NEW YORK, MR. WILLIAMS. A TIGHT CIRCLE OF FRIENDS.
ABOUT A MONTH BACK, ONE OF OUR FRIENDS VANISHED QUITE SUDDENLY. WE WERE HOPING YOU'D BE ABLE TO FIND WHERE IN CHICAGO HE IS.
HEY, I'LL DO MY BEST.
SO, WHY DO YOU THINK YER PAL'S IN CHICAGO?
WE HAVE OUR REASONS.
TELL ME, MR. WILLIAMS, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BUSINESS? WHERE DID YOU WORK BEFORE?
DO YOU HAVE ANY REFERENCES WE MIGHT SEE?
REFERENCES? BABE, NOT IN THIS BUSINESS!
ME AN' JO OPENED UP SHOP ABOUT A MONTH AGO. I WON'T LIE, BUSINESS HAS BEEN LESS THAN SATISFACTORY.
IT'S BEEN ZIP, TO PUT IT BLUNTLY.
PEOPLE COME--BUT F'R SOME REASON THEY RUN OUTTA HERE LIKE GREASED LIGHTNING. I TOLD JO WE GOTTA REDECORATE.
AS FOR THE PAST, HEY, IT'S THE PAST, RIGHT?

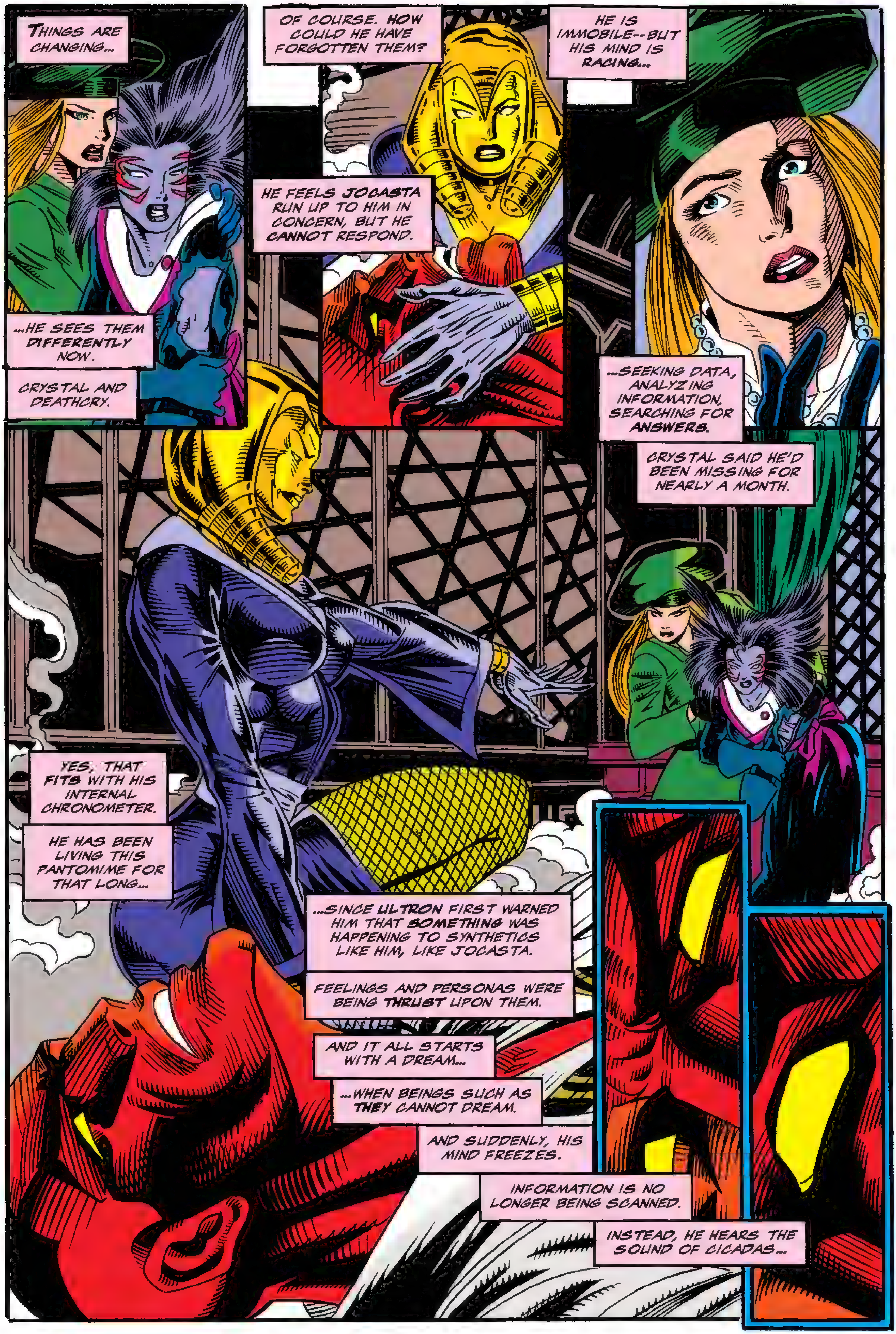

NOW, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FRIEND--
--AND TELL YOUR KID SISTER, NOTHIN'S GOING T'MAKE THAT MILLINERY MASTERPIECE ON HER HEAD LOOK GOOD.
hmmmphhh
I'M SURE SHE AGREES, DON'T YOU, DC?
DON'T PUSH IT, CRYSTAL!
AS FOR OUR FRIEND, MR. WILLIAMS? HE DISAPPEARED AFTER HE HAD SOME DISTURBING DREAMS.
DO YOU HAVE DREAMS, MR. WILLIAMS?
NO.
BUT I DO KNOW WHEN ONE WALKS INTO MY LIFE--
--KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
NOW, NOW, MR. WILLIAMS--

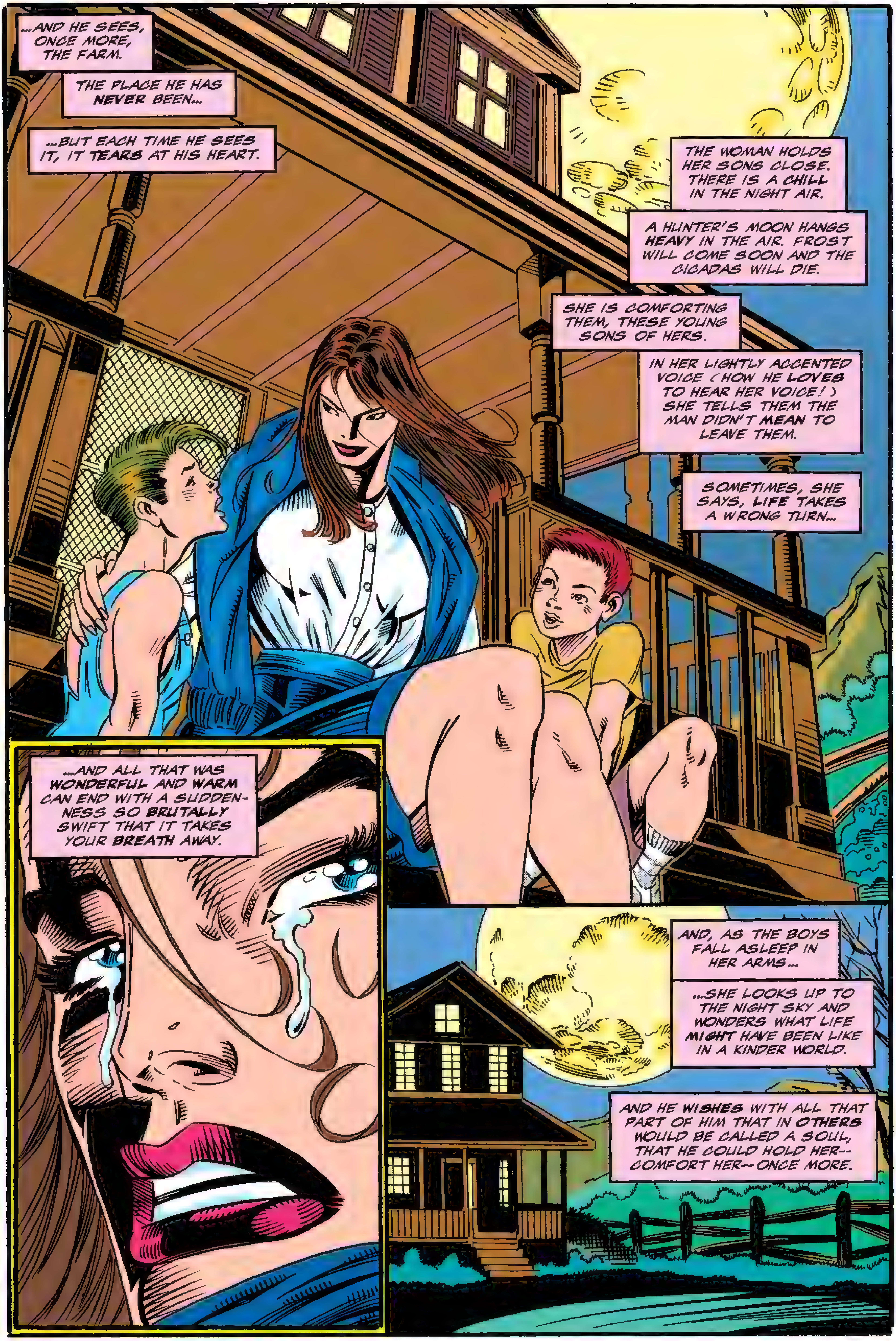

--YOU OUGHT TO MIND YOUR MANNERS.
RUMMBLE!
WHAT IN SAM HILL--!?
WHAT ARE YOU PEOPLE!?
YOU WAVE YOUR HAND--AND THE WHOLE BUILDING SHAKES LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW--
--AND JUNIOR MISS OVER THERE LOOKS LIKE A REJECT FROM FLASH GORDON!
I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, "MR. WILLIAMS"...
...BUT HAVE YOU TAKEN A LOOK IN THE MIRROR LATELY?

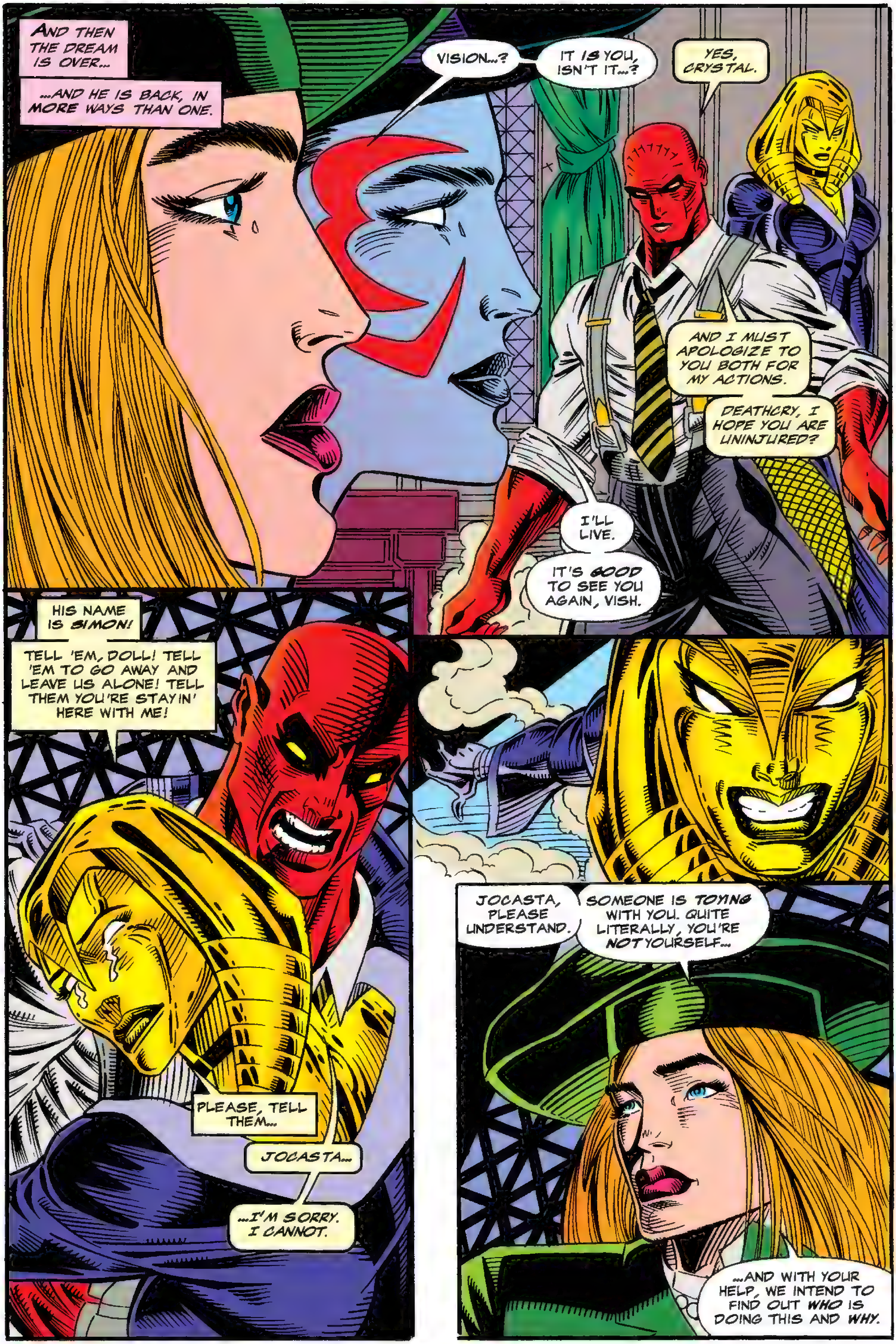

OBVIOUSLY WE'RE DEALING WITH SOME SORT OF MIND CONTROL HERE, DEATHCRY--
--CONTACT THE MANSION AND--
SIMON!!
I KNEW YOUSE DAMES WERE TROUBLE THE MINUTE YOU WALKED IN THE DOOR!
MOVE AWAY FROM HIM OR I'LL PUMP YA FULL O' LEAD!
BAM!
BAM!
"I'LL PUMP YA FULL O' LEAD?"
EXCUSE ME, BUT DO TERRANS REALLY TALK THIS WAY?
GET AWAY FROM ME!
SORRY NO CAN DO, "JO."
CRYSTAL, THIS CHARADE'S GONE ON LONG ENOUGH, DON'T YOU THINK?
I DO.
NOW, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DREAMS...
...VISION.

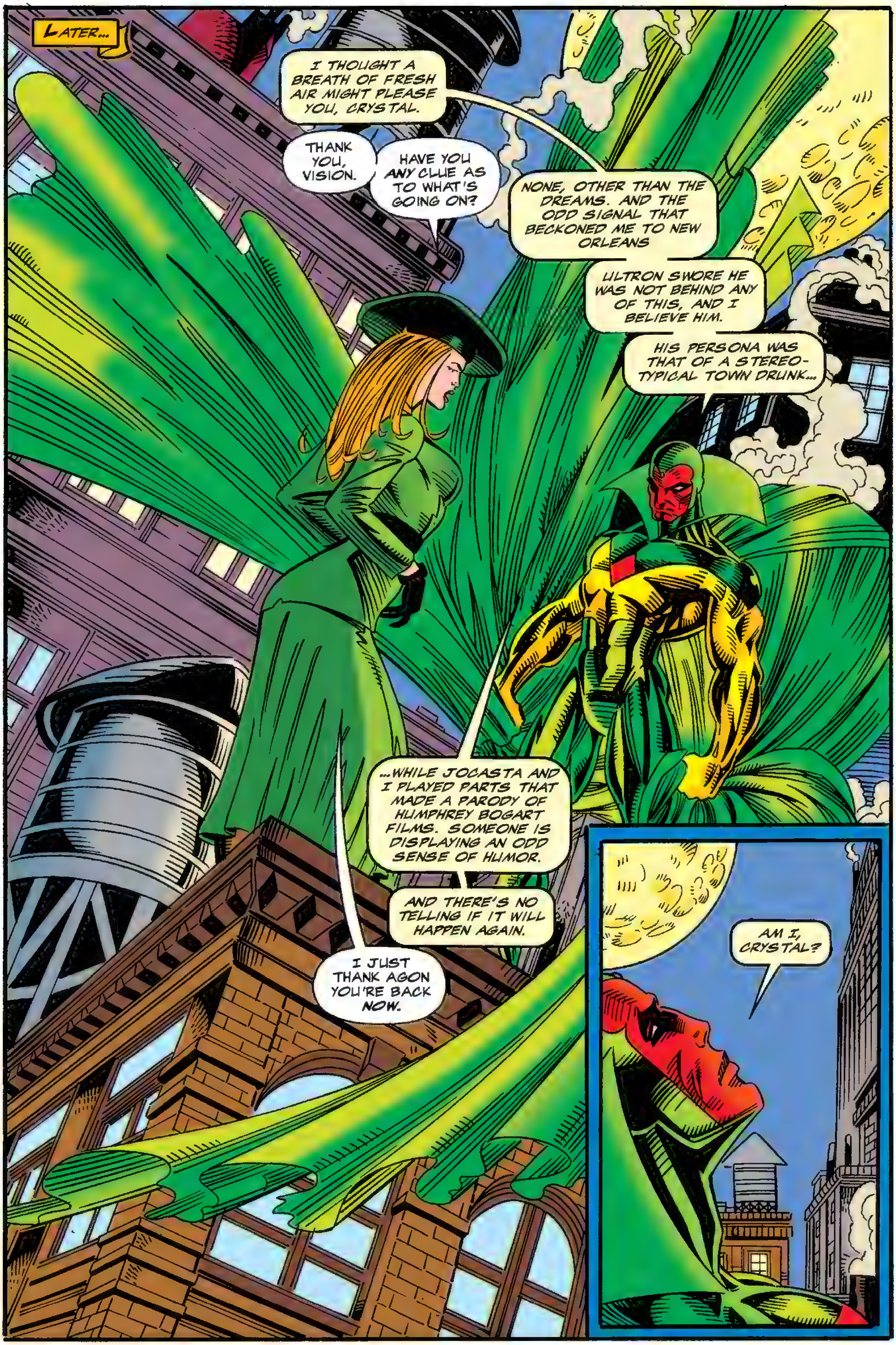

I
DON'T
WANT
TO
TALK
ABOUT
THAT!
HEYYY!
SZZZZ!
AS FOR YOU, FEATHERTOP--
--GET YOUR MITTS OFF JO!
DEATHCRY!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?
O--OF COURSE I AM!
EVEN WHEN HE'S ACTING LIKE A JERK, THE VISH WOULDN'T REALLY WANT TO HURT ME...
...WOULD HE?
SIMON--
--WHAT'S WRONG?
D--DUNNO, BABE--
--B--BUT MY HEAD FEELS LIKE IT'S GONNA SPLIT IN TWO.

WHO ARE YOU TWO!?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SIMON!?
JOCASTA, YOU MUST TRUST US, WE'RE HERE TO HELP.
WE'VE MET BEFORE, BRIEFLY.
YOU'RE CRAZY!
NO, WE'RE AVENGERS, AND 'SIMON' IS REALLY OUR FELLOW MEMBER, THE SYNTHEZOID CALLED THE VISION.
AND YOU ARE AN ARTIFICIAL LIFE FORM FROM A VARIANT TIMELINE.*
YOU TELL ME ALL THIS AND SAY YOU'RE NOT CRAZY?
*SEE AVENGERS #373. --RALPH
JO, STOP SHOUTIN'! MY HEAD IS BURSTING.
JEEZ, WHAT IN SAM HILL IS WRONG WITH MY--
--HEAD!?
SIMON!?
THUDD!

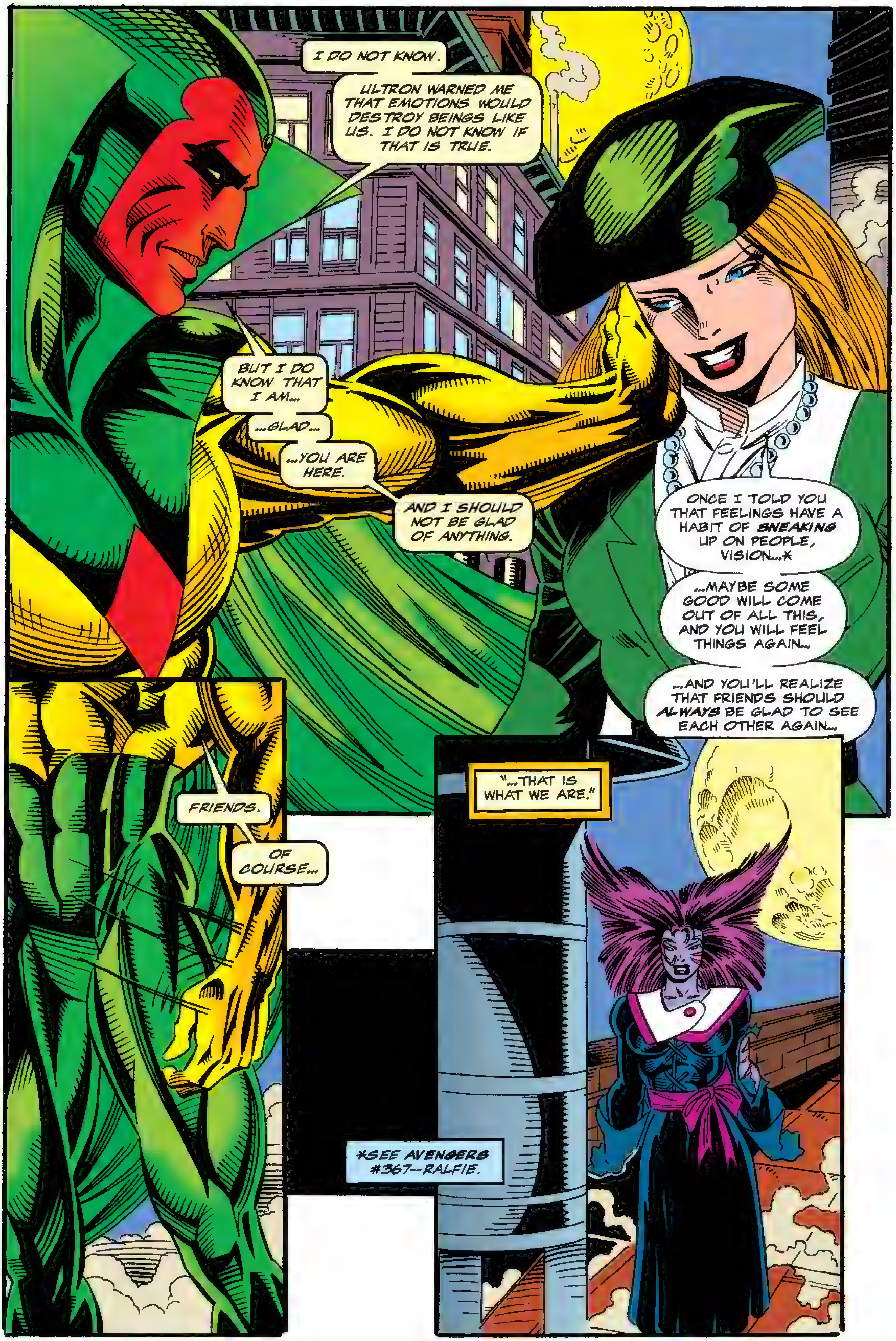

THINGS ARE CHANGING...
...HE SEES THEM DIFFERENTLY NOW.
CRYSTAL AND DEATHCRY.
OF COURSE. HOW COULD HE HAVE FORGOTTEN THEM?
HE FEELS JOCASTA RUN UP TO HIM IN CONCERN, BUT HE CANNOT RESPOND.
HE IS IMMOBILE--BUT HIS MIND IS RACING...
...SEEKING DATA, ANALYZING INFORMATION, SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS.
CRYSTAL SAID HE'D BEEN MISSING FOR NEARLY A MONTH.
YES. THAT FITS WITH HIS INTERNAL CHRONOMETER.
HE HAS BEEN LIVING THIS PANTOMIME FOR THAT LONG...
...SINCE ULTRON FIRST WARNED HIM THAT SOMETHING WAS HAPPENING TO SYNTHETICS LIKE HIM, LIKE JOCASTA.
FEELINGS AND PERSONAS WERE BEING THRUST UPON THEM.
AND IT ALL STARTS WITH A DREAM...
...WHEN BEINGS SUCH AS THEY CANNOT DREAM.
AND SUDDENLY, HIS MIND FREEZES.
INFORMATION IS NO LONGER BEING SCANNED.
INSTEAD, HE HEARS THE SOUND OF CICADAS...

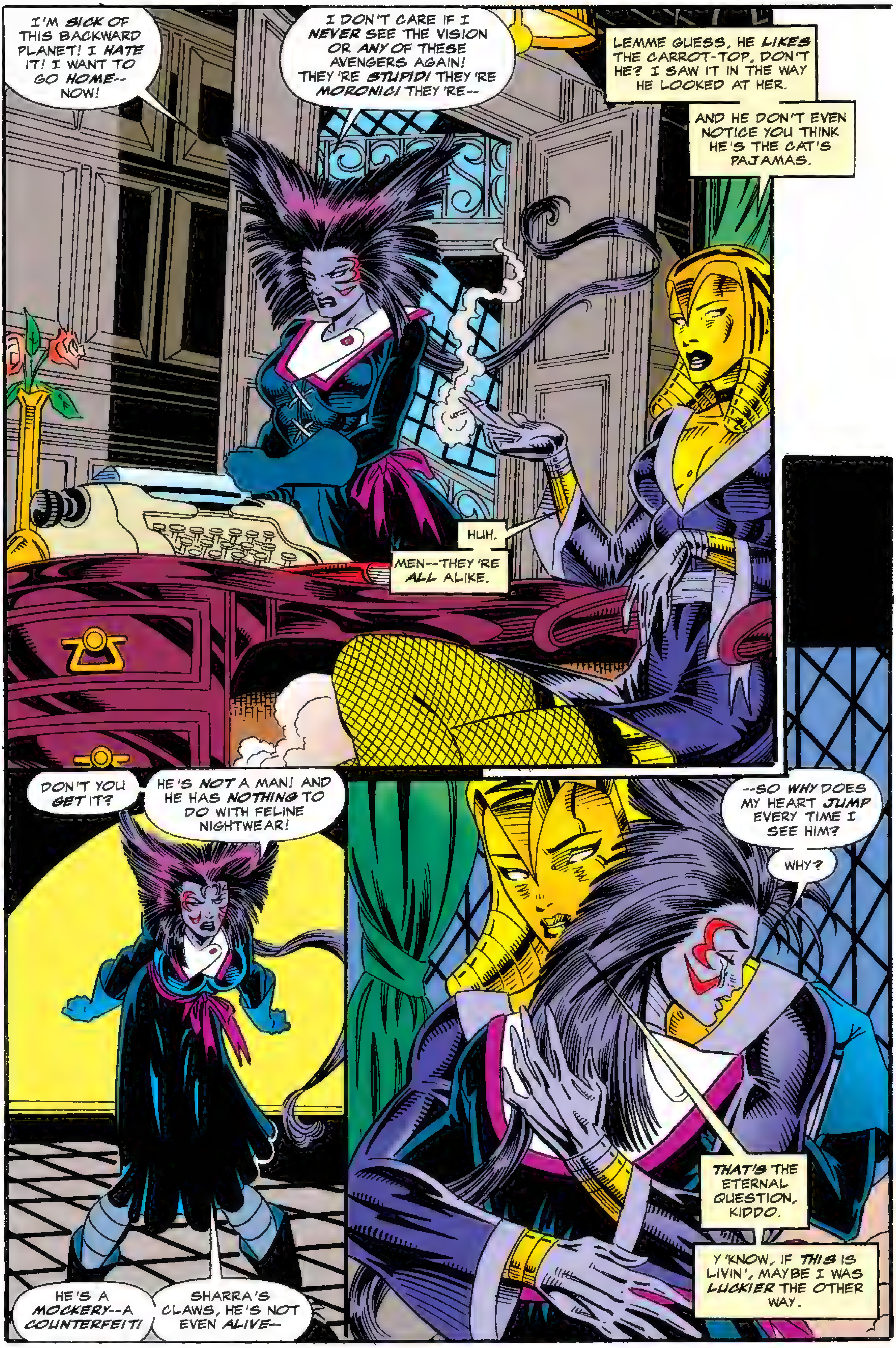

...AND HE SEES, ONCE MORE, THE FARM.
THE PLACE HE HAS NEVER BEEN...
...BUT EACH TIME HE SEES IT, IT TEARS AT HIS HEART.
THE WOMAN HOLDS HER SONS CLOSE. THERE IS A CHILL IN THE NIGHT AIR.
A HUNTER'S MOON HANGS HEAVY IN THE AIR. FROST WILL COME SOON AND THE CICADAS WILL DIE.
SHE IS COMFORTING THEM, THESE YOUNG SONS OF HERS.
IN HER LIGHTLY ACCENTED VOICE (HOW HE LOVES TO HEAR HER VOICE!) SHE TELLS THEM THE MAN DIDN'T MEAN TO LEAVE THEM.
SOMETIMES, SHE SAYS, LIFE TAKES A WRONG TURN...
...AND ALL THAT WAS WONDERFUL AND WARM CAN END WITH A SUDDENNESS SO BRUTALLY SWIFT THAT IT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY.
AND, AS THE BOYS FALL ASLEEP IN HER ARMS...
...SHE LOOKS UP TO THE NIGHT SKY AND WONDERS WHAT LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN LIKE IN A KINDER WORLD.
AND HE WISHES WITH ALL THAT PART OF HIM THAT IN OTHERS WOULD BE CALLED A SOUL, THAT HE COULD HOLD HER-- COMFORT HER-- ONCE MORE.

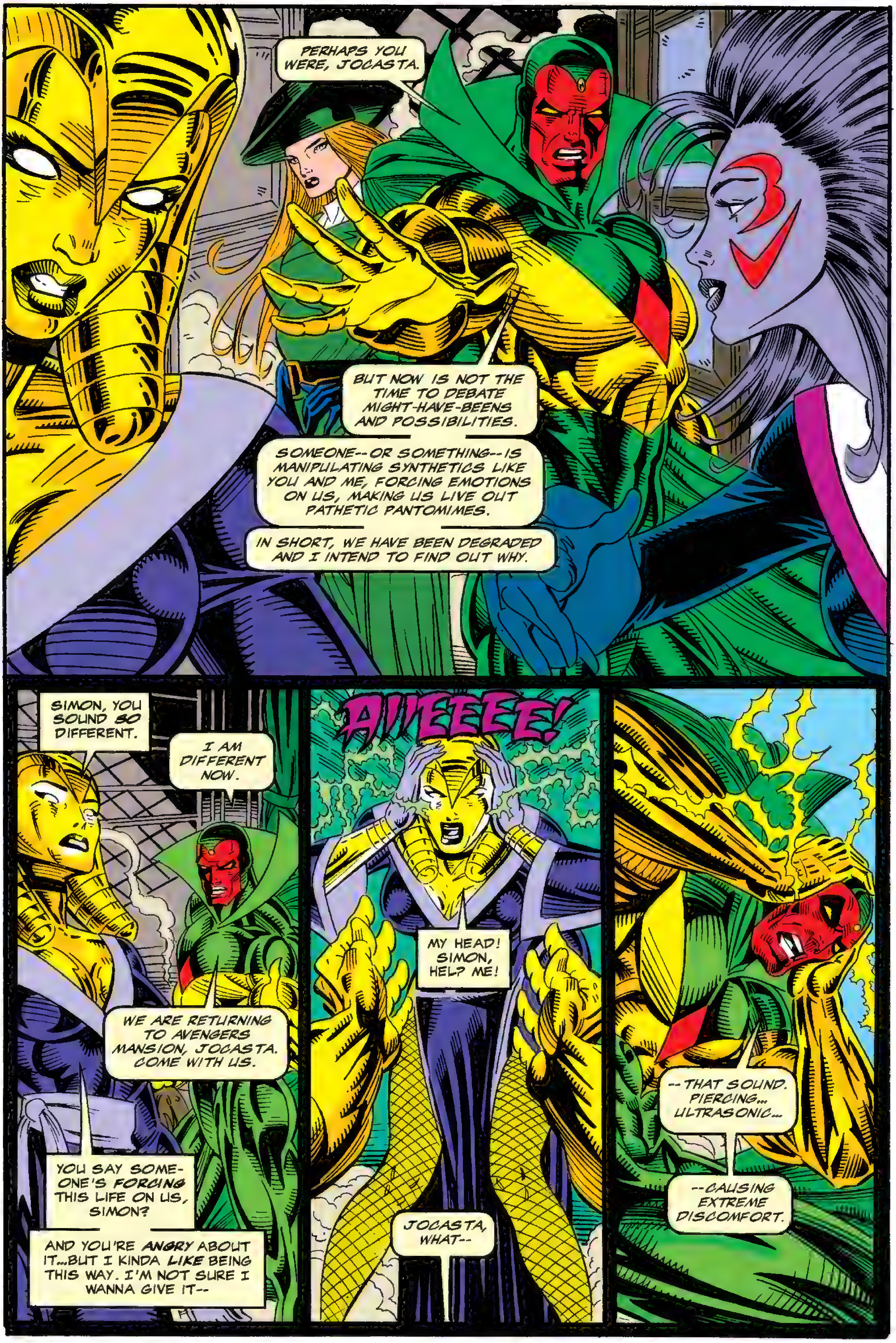

AND THEN THE DREAM IS OVER...
...AND HE IS BACK, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.
VISION...?
IT IS YOU, ISN'T IT...?
YES, CRYSTAL.
AND I MUST APOLOGIZE TO YOU BOTH FOR MY ACTIONS.
DEATHCRY, I HOPE YOU ARE UNINJURED?
I'LL LIVE.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, VISH.
HIS NAME IS SIMON!
TELL 'EM, DOLL! TELL 'EM TO GO AWAY AND LEAVE US ALONE! TELL THEM YOU'RE STAYIN' HERE WITH ME!
PLEASE, TELL THEM...
JOCASTA...
...I'M SORRY. I CANNOT.
JOCASTA, PLEASE UNDERSTAND.
SOMEONE IS TOYING WITH YOU. QUITE LITERALLY, YOU'RE NOT YOURSELF...
...AND WITH YOUR HELP, WE INTEND TO FIND OUT WHO IS DOING THIS AND WHY.

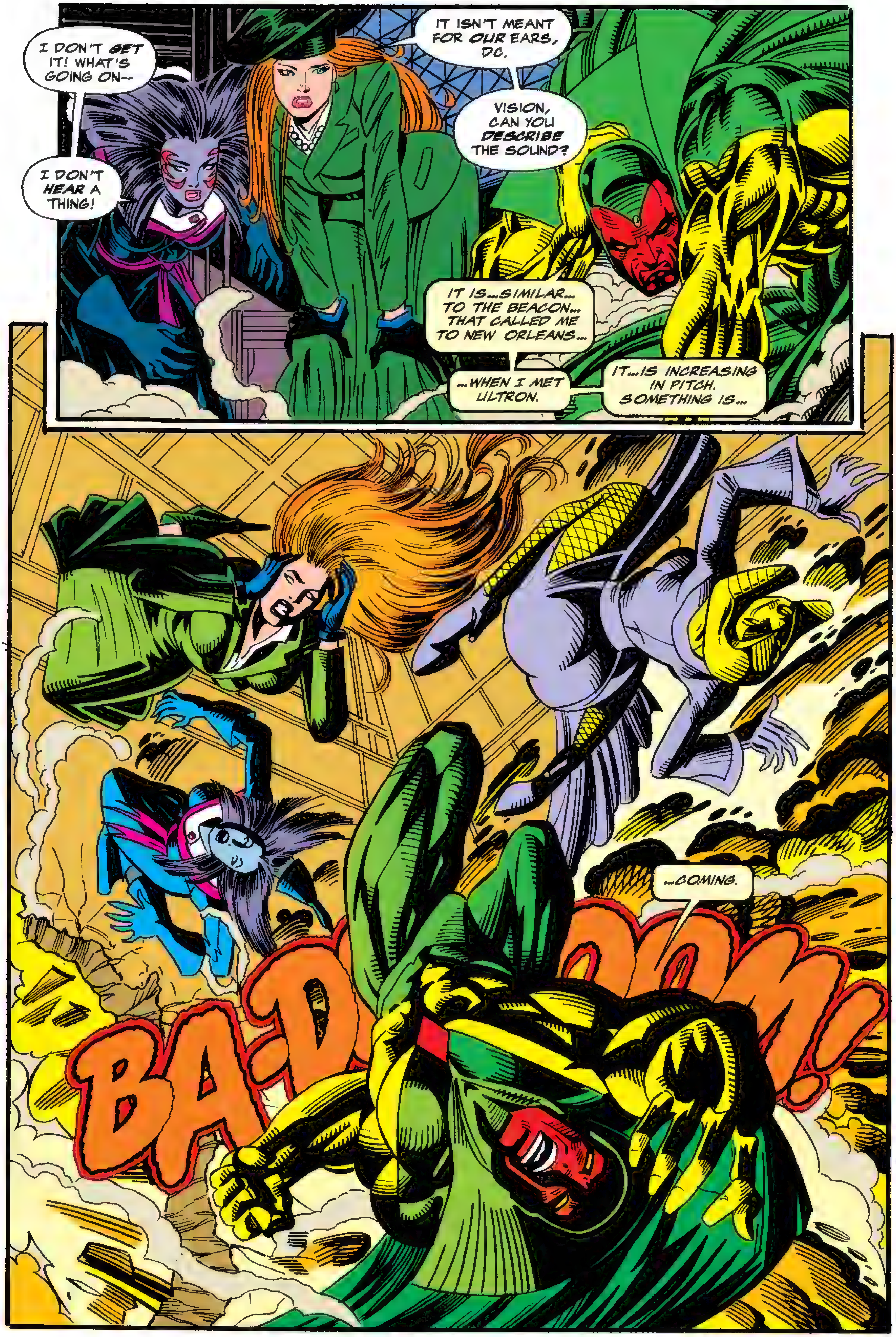

LATER...
I THOUGHT A BREATH OF FRESH AIR MIGHT PLEASE YOU, CRYSTAL.
THANK YOU, VISION.
HAVE YOU ANY CLUE AS TO WHAT'S GOING ON?
NONE, OTHER THAN THE DREAMS. AND THE ODD SIGNAL THAT BECKONED ME TO NEW ORLEANS
ULTRON SWORE HE WAS NOT BEHIND ANY OF THIS, AND I BELIEVE HIM.
HIS PERSONA WAS THAT OF A STEREOTYPICAL TOWN DRUNK...
...WHILE JOCASTA AND I PLAYED PARTS THAT MADE A PARODY OF HUMPHREY BOGART FILMS. SOMEONE IS DISPLAYING AN ODD SENSE OF HUMOR.
AND THERE'S NO TELLING IF IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN.
I JUST THANK AGON YOU'RE BACK NOW.
AM I, CRYSTAL?

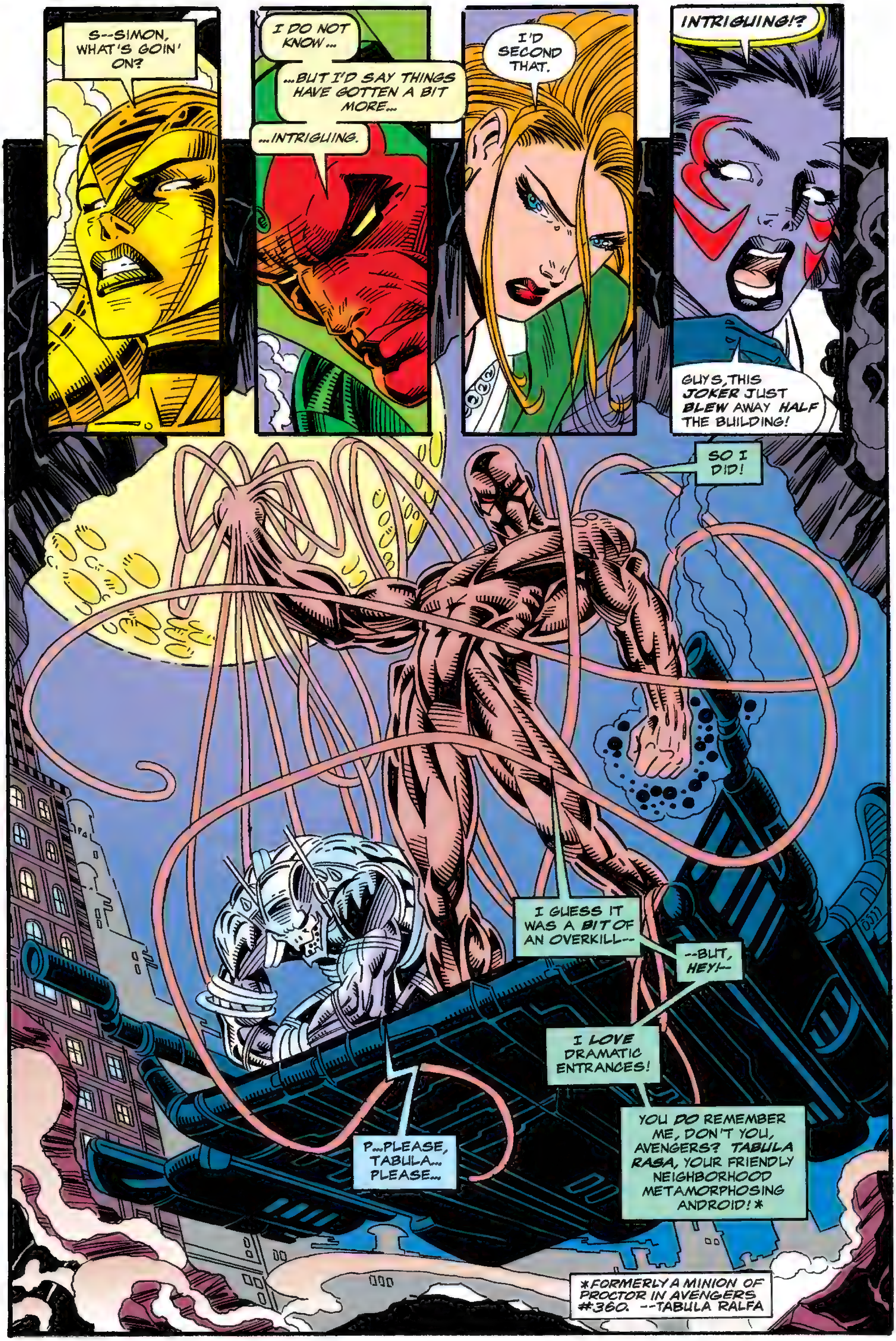
IT IS SAID THAT EXPERIENCE SHAPES THE MAN.
AND I'VE EXPERIENCED MANY THINGS THESE PAST WEEKS... THINGS I'D FORGOTTEN.
YOU REMEMBER, OF COURSE, THAT I USED TO FEEL. I HAD EMOTIONS.
I REMEMBER.
I LAUGHED. I CRIED.
I LOVED.
WHEN I WAS REPROGRAMMED, I LOST THAT ABILITY.
MY PAST LIFE WAS NOTHING MORE THAN INTRIGUING DATA I COULD RETRIEVE FROM MEMORY FROM TIME TO TIME TO EXAMINE AS CURIOS FROM A BYGONE ERA.
BUT NOW, IT IS ALL FRESH IN MY MIND AGAIN. THE TASTE OF LIFE AND I--
--I--
DO YOU FEEL ANYTHING NOW, VISION?
OR ARE YOU--
OR AM I JUST A ROBOT?
AN AMAZING SIMULATION OF BIOLOGICAL LIFE... BUT IN THE END, A ROBOT NONETHELESS?

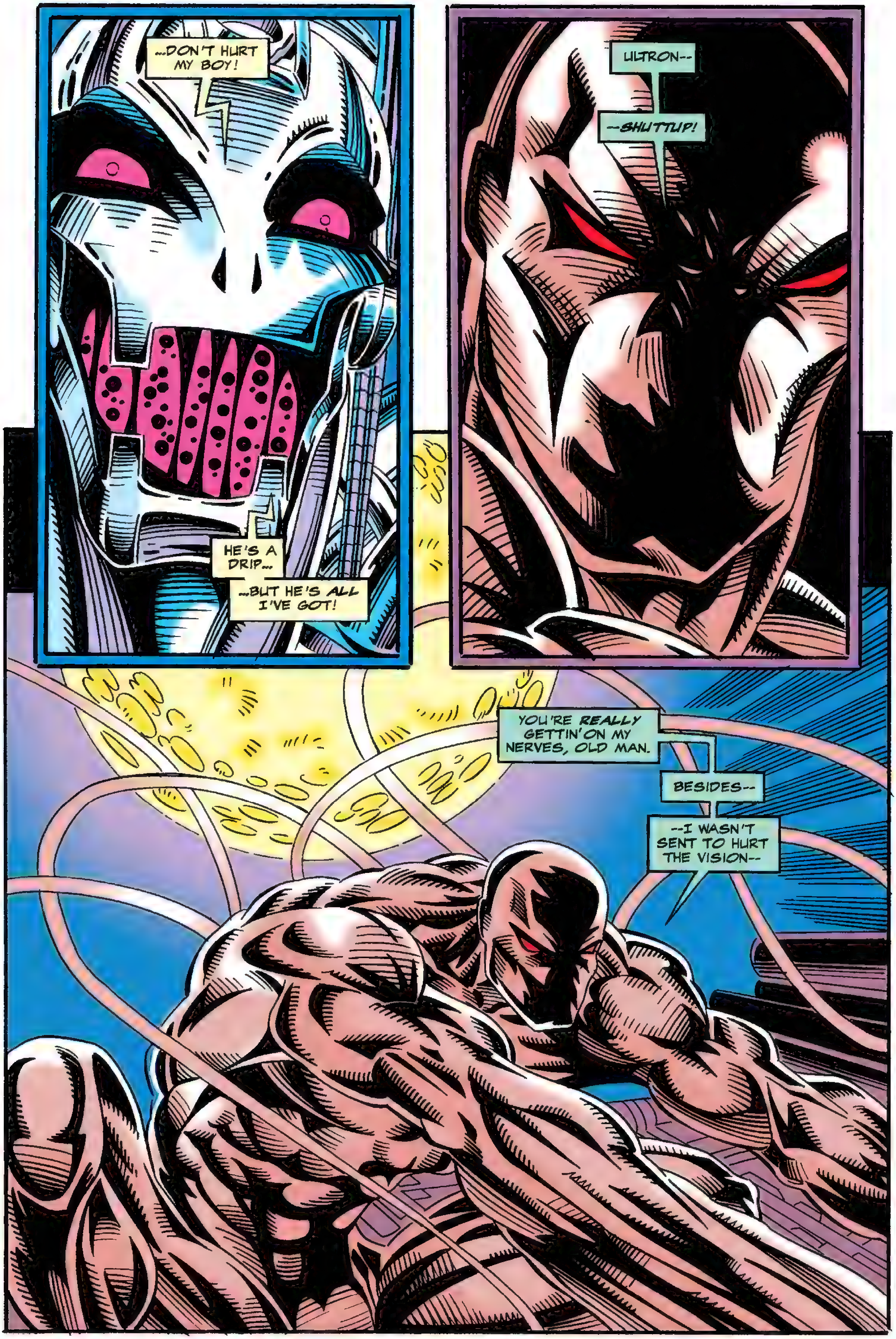

I DO NOT KNOW.
ULTRON WARNED ME THAT EMOTIONS WOULD DESTROY BEINGS LIKE US. I DO NOT KNOW IF THAT IS TRUE.
BUT I DO KNOW THAT I AM...
...GLAD...
...YOU ARE HERE.
AND I SHOULD NOT BE GLAD OF ANYTHING.
ONCE I TOLD YOU THAT FEELINGS HAVE A HABIT OF **SNEAKING** UP ON PEOPLE, VISION...*
...MAYBE SOME GOOD WILL COME OUT OF ALL THIS, AND YOU WILL FEEL THINGS AGAIN...
...AND YOU'LL REALIZE THAT FRIENDS SHOULD **ALWAYS** BE GLAD TO SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN...
FRIENDS.
OF COURSE...
"...THAT IS WHAT WE ARE."
*SEE AVENGERS #367--RALFIE.

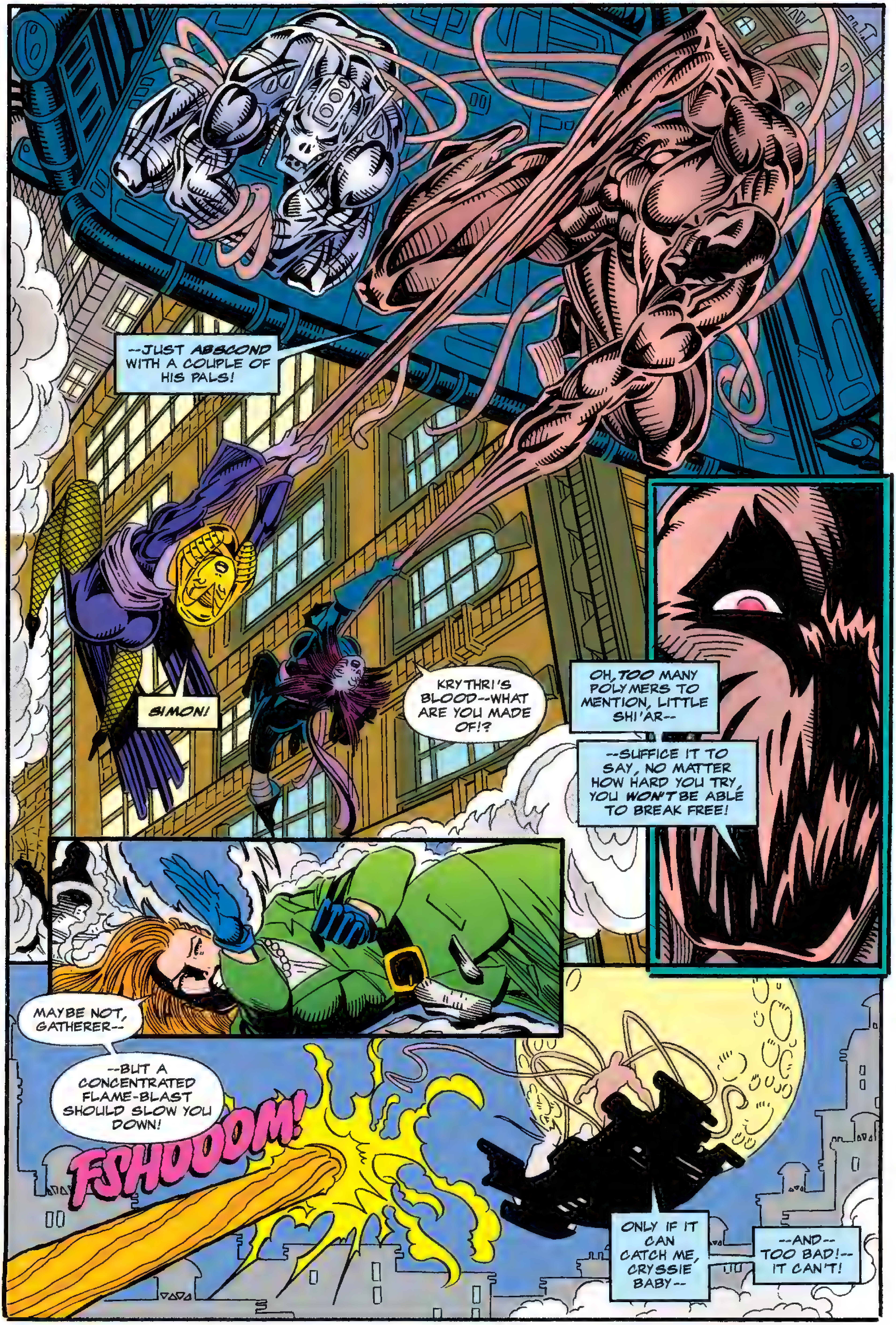

I'M **SICK** OF THIS BACKWARD PLANET! I **HATE** IT! I WANT TO GO **HOME**--NOW!
I DON'T CARE IF I **NEVER** SEE THE VISION OR **ANY** OF THESE AVENGERS AGAIN! THEY'RE **STUPID!** THEY'RE **MORONIC!** THEY'RE--
LEMME GUESS, HE **LIKES** THE CARROT-TOP, DON'T HE? I SAW IT IN THE WAY HE LOOKED AT HER.
AND HE DON'T EVEN NOTICE YOU THINK HE'S THE CAT'S PAJAMAS.
HUH.
MEN--THEY'RE **ALL** ALIKE.
DON'T YOU **GET** IT?
HE'S **NOT** A MAN! AND HE HAS **NOTHING** TO DO WITH FELINE NIGHTWEAR!
HE'S A **MOCKERY**--A **COUNTERFEIT!**
SHARRA'S CLAWS, HE'S NOT EVEN **ALIVE**--
--**SO WHY** DOES MY HEART **JUMP** EVERY TIME I SEE HIM?
WHY?
THAT'S THE ETERNAL QUESTION, KIDDO.
Y'KNOW, IF **THIS** IS LIVIN', MAYBE I WAS **LUCKIER** THE OTHER WAY.

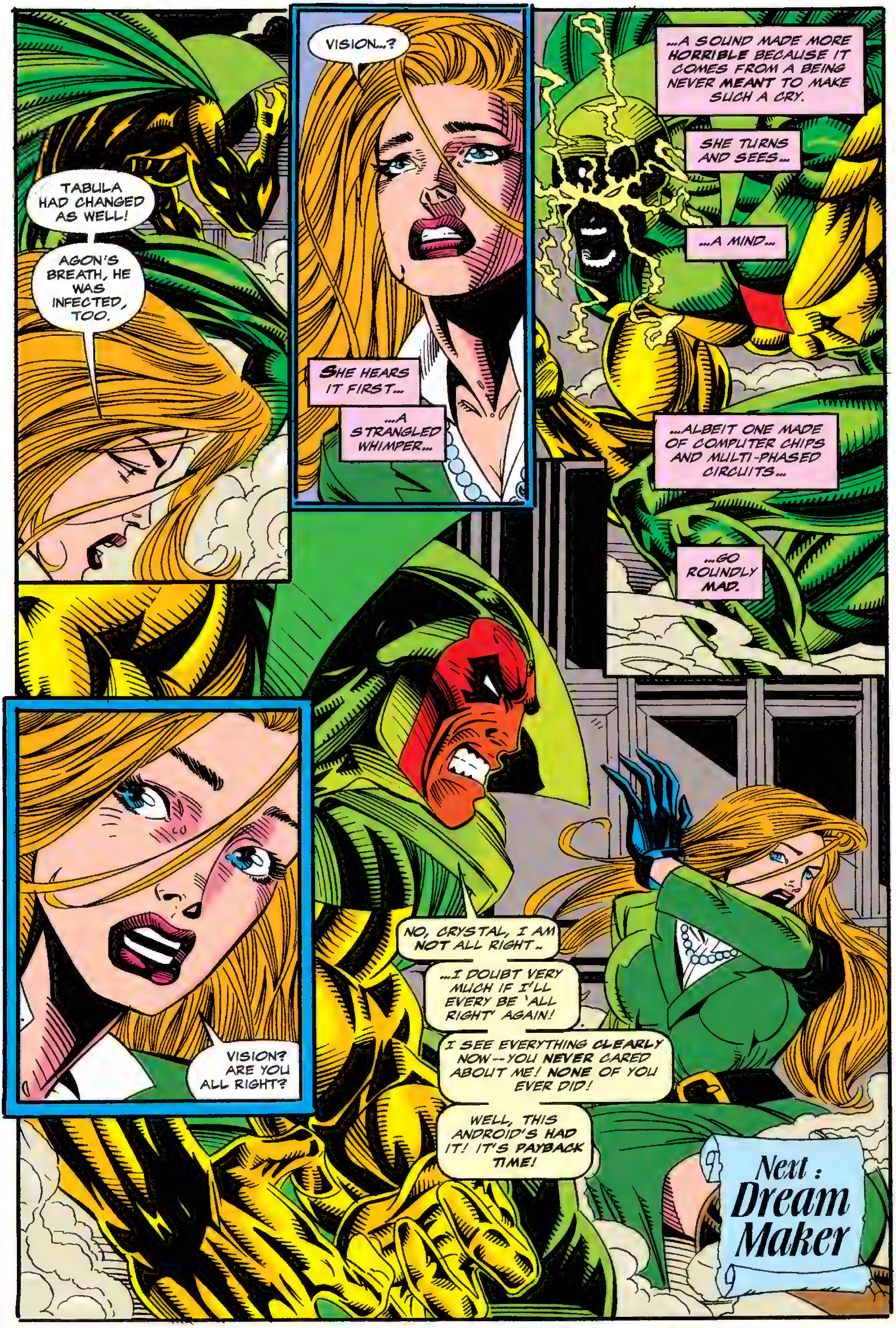

PERHAPS YOU WERE, JOCASTA.
BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO DEBATE MIGHT-HAVE-BEENS AND POSSIBILITIES.
SOMEONE--OR SOMETHING--IS MANIPULATING SYNTHETICS LIKE YOU AND ME, FORCING EMOTIONS ON US, MAKING US LIVE OUT PATHETIC PANTOMIMES.
IN SHORT, WE HAVE BEEN DEGRADED AND I INTEND TO FIND OUT WHY.
SIMON, YOU SOUND *SO* DIFFERENT.
I AM DIFFERENT NOW.
WE ARE RETURNING TO AVENGERS MANSION, JOCASTA. COME WITH US.
YOU SAY SOMEONE'S ***FORCING*** THIS LIFE ON US, SIMON?
AND YOU'RE ***ANGRY*** ABOUT IT...BUT I KINDA ***LIKE*** BEING THIS WAY. I'M NOT SURE I WANNA GIVE IT--
AIIEEEE!
MY HEAD! SIMON, HELP ME!
JOCASTA, WHAT--
--THAT SOUND. PIERCING... ULTRASONIC...
--CAUSING EXTREME DISCOMFORT.


I DON'T GET IT! WHAT'S GOING ON--
I DON'T HEAR A THING!
IT ISN'T MEANT FOR OUR EARS, DC.
VISION, CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE SOUND?
IT IS...SIMILAR... TO THE BEACON... THAT CALLED ME TO NEW ORLEANS...
...WHEN I MET ULTRON.
IT...IS INCREASING IN PITCH. SOMETHING IS...
...COMING.
BA-DOOOM!

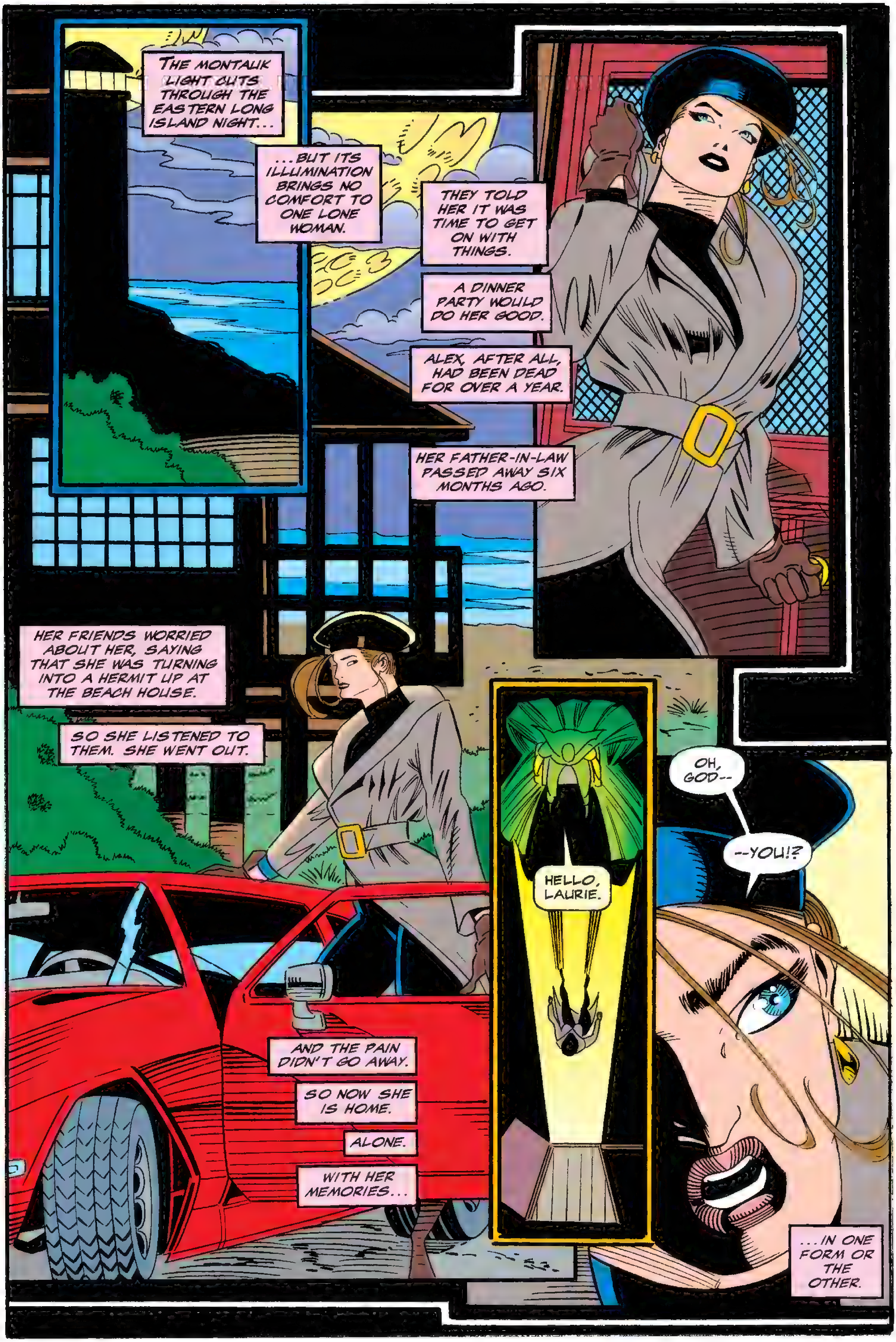

S--SIMON, WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
I DO NOT KNOW...
...BUT I'D SAY THINGS HAVE GOTTEN A BIT MORE...
...INTRIGUING.
I'D SECOND THAT.
INTRIGUING!?
GUYS, THIS JOKER JUST BLEW AWAY HALF THE BUILDING!
SO I DID!
I GUESS IT WAS A BIT OF AN OVERKILL--
--BUT, HEY!--
I LOVE DRAMATIC ENTRANCES!
YOU DO REMEMBER ME, DON'T YOU, AVENGERS? TABULA RASA, YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD METAMORPHOSING ANDROID! *
P...PLEASE, TABULA... PLEASE...
*FORMERLY A MINION OF PROCTOR IN AVENGERS #360. --TABULA RALFA

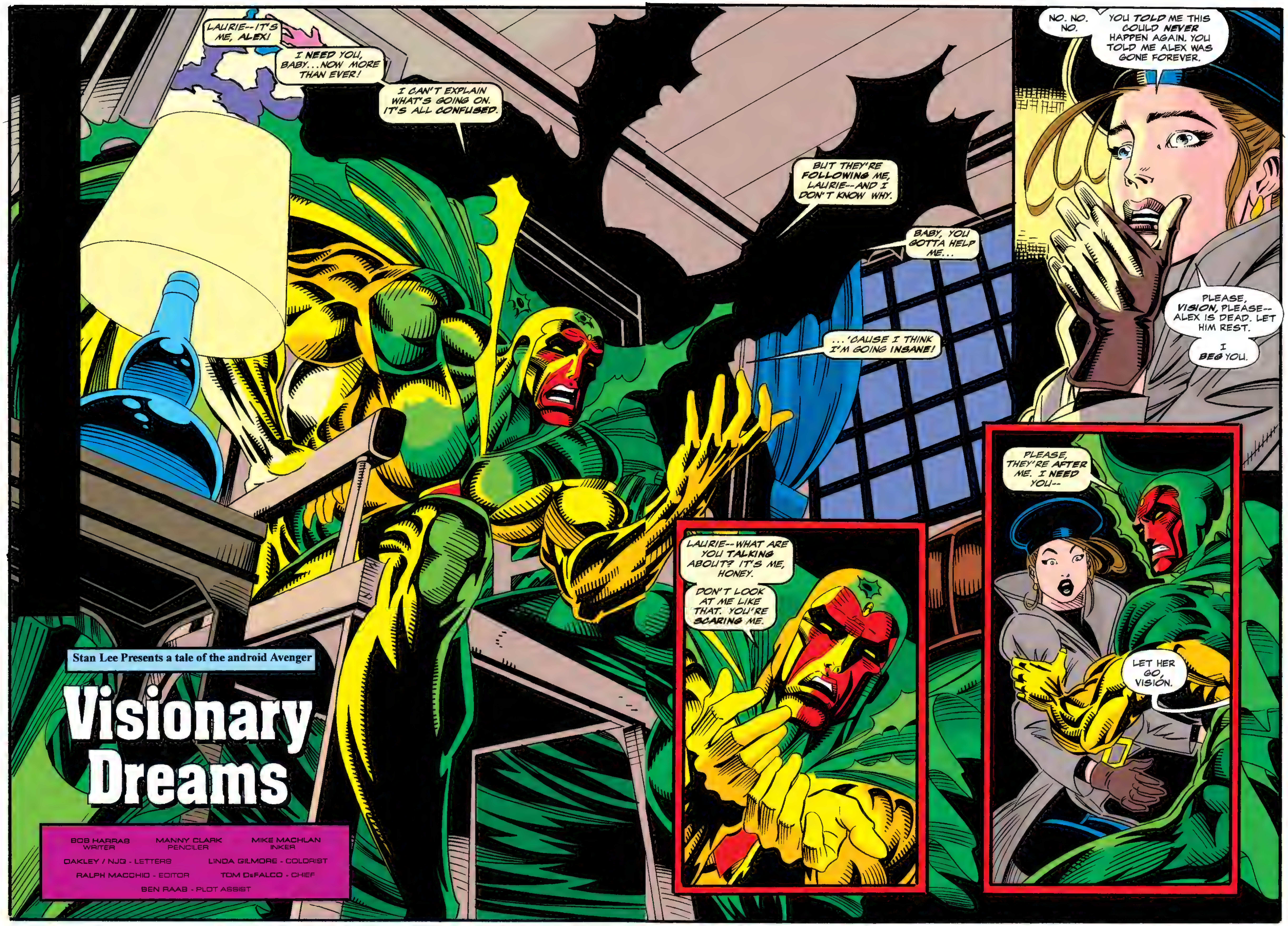

...DON'T HURT MY BOY!
HE'S A DRIP...
...BUT HE'S ALL I'VE GOT!
ULTRON--
--SHUTTUP!
YOU'RE REALLY GETTIN' ON MY NERVES, OLD MAN.
BESIDES--
--I WASN'T SENT TO HURT THE VISION--


--JUST *ABSCOND* WITH A COUPLE OF HIS PALS!
SIMON!
KRYTHRI'S BLOOD--WHAT ARE YOU MADE OF!?
OH, *TOO* MANY POLYMERS TO MENTION, LITTLE SHI'AR--
--SUFFICE IT TO SAY, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU *WON'T* BE ABLE TO BREAK FREE!
MAYBE NOT, GATHERER--
--BUT A CONCENTRATED FLAME-BLAST SHOULD SLOW YOU DOWN!
FSHOOOOM!
ONLY IF IT CAN CATCH ME, CRYSSIE BABY--
--AND-- TOO BAD!--IT CAN'T!


TABULA HAD CHANGED AS WELL!
AGON'S BREATH, HE WAS INFECTED, TOO.
VISION...?
SHE HEARS IT FIRST...
...A STRANGLED WHIMPER...
...A SOUND MADE MORE HORRIBLE BECAUSE IT COMES FROM A BEING NEVER MEANT TO MAKE SUCH A CRY.
SHE TURNS AND SEES...
...A MIND...
...ALBEIT ONE MADE OF COMPUTER CHIPS AND MULTI-PHASED CIRCUITS...
...GO ROUNDLY MAD.
VISION? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO, CRYSTAL, I AM NOT ALL RIGHT..
...I DOUBT VERY MUCH IF I'LL EVERY BE 'ALL RIGHT' AGAIN!
I SEE EVERYTHING CLEARLY NOW--YOU NEVER CARED ABOUT ME! NONE OF YOU EVER DID!
WELL, THIS ANDROID'S HAD IT! IT'S PAYBACK TIME!
Next : Dream Maker

MARVEL COMICS
JAN
CHAPTER THREE
THE VISION
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY


THE MONTAUK LIGHT CUTS THROUGH THE EASTERN LONG ISLAND NIGHT...
...BUT ITS ILLUMINATION BRINGS NO COMFORT TO ONE LONE WOMAN.
THEY TOLD HER IT WAS TIME TO GET ON WITH THINGS.
A DINNER PARTY WOULD DO HER GOOD.
ALEX, AFTER ALL, HAD BEEN DEAD FOR OVER A YEAR.
HER FATHER-IN-LAW PASSED AWAY SIX MONTHS AGO.
HER FRIENDS WORRIED ABOUT HER, SAYING THAT SHE WAS TURNING INTO A HERMIT UP AT THE BEACH HOUSE.
SO SHE LISTENED TO THEM. SHE WENT OUT.
AND THE PAIN DIDN'T GO AWAY.
SO NOW SHE IS HOME.
ALONE.
WITH HER MEMORIES...
HELLO, LAURIE.
OH, GOD--
--YOU!?
...IN ONE FORM OR THE OTHER.


LAURIE--IT'S ME, ALEX!
I NEED YOU, BABY...NOW MORE THAN EVER!
I CAN'T EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON. IT'S ALL CONFUSED.
BUT THEY'RE FOLLOWING ME, LAURIE--AND I DON'T KNOW WHY.
BABY, YOU GOTTA HELP ME...
...'CAUSE I THINK I'M GOING INSANE!
NO. NO. NO.
YOU TOLD ME THIS COULD NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN. YOU TOLD ME ALEX WAS GONE FOREVER.
PLEASE, VISION, PLEASE-- ALEX IS DEAD. LET HIM REST.
I BEG YOU.
LAURIE--WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? IT'S ME, HONEY.
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. YOU'RE SCARING ME.
PLEASE, THEY'RE AFTER ME. I NEED YOU--
LET HER GO, VISION.

Stan Lee Presents a tale of the android Avenger

Visionary Dreams

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LINDA GILMORE - COLORIST
RALPH MACCHIO - EDITOR
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BEN RAAB - PLOT ASSIST

THIS ALL HAS TO END NOW.
HE, HANK PYM, CALLED GIANT-MAN.
SHE IS SIMPLY CRYSTAL.
BOTH ARE MEMBERS OF THAT BAND OF HEROES CALLED THE MIGHTY AVENGERS.
AS IS THE MAN THEY NOW ADDRESS. THE BEWILDERED SYNTHEZOID DESIGNATED THE VISION.
FOR THE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS, HE ALMOST RECOGNIZES THEM...
BUT THE MEMORY FADES.
FEAR...
...AND CONFUSION...
...FILL THE VOID.
DON'T BE AFRAID, VISION.
IT'S TAKEN A LONG TIME TO FIND YOU SINCE CHICAGO--
--BUT HANK AND I ARE HERE TO HELP. YOU MUST BELIEVE US.
JUST LET LAURA GO, VISION.
ALEX LIPTON IS DEAD... YOU'RE NOT HIM. YOU NEVER WERE.
AND LAURA HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU.

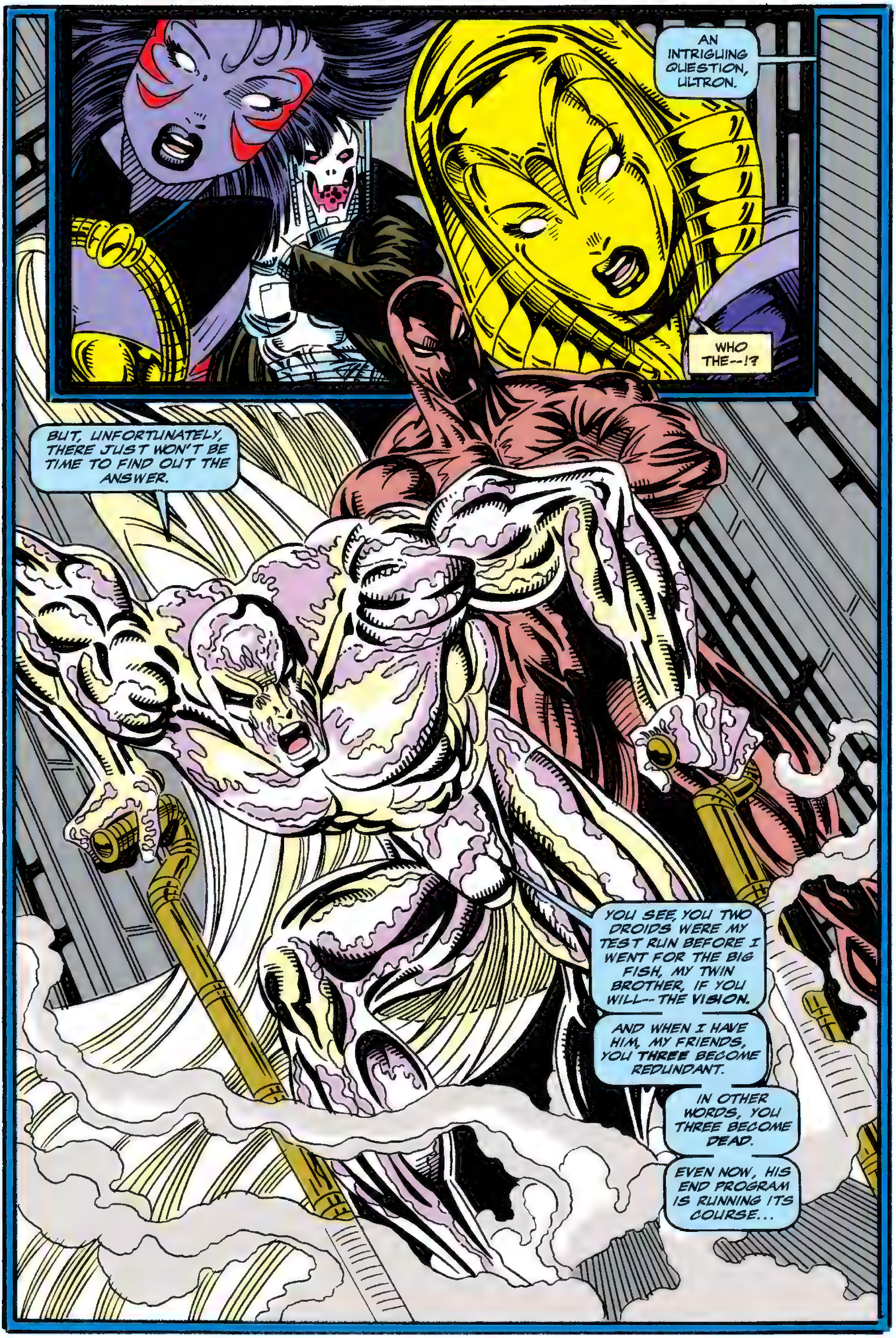
STOP FOLLOWING ME!
I WANT TO STAY HERE WITH MY WIFE! I WANT TO STAY WITH WANDA!
OH, LORD.
CRYS, HIS ENTIRE PERSONA CORE IS COLLAPSING. HIS MEMORY PROGRAM'S SEVERELY DISRUPTED. WE'VE GOT TO BE REALLY CAREFUL HERE...
...OR WE COULD LOSE HIM FOREVER.
VISION, LOOK AT HER. TAKE A GOOD LOOK--
THIS ISN'T WANDA. IT'S LAURA.
AND YOU'RE FRIGHTENING HER. YOU DON'T WANT TO DO THAT, DO YOU?
N--NO, OF COURSE NOT.
A MOMENT'S HESITATION--
--A MOMENT'S DOUBT--
--IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED.
GOOD GOING, CRYS! I HAVE HER!
NOW MOVE AWAY FROM HIM--HE'S DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE.
FROM SOMEWHERE WITHIN HIS MIND, A MEMORY OF THIS MAN PYM RETURNS...
...COUPLED WITH A RAGE HE INSTINCTIVELY KNOWS SHOULD BE ALIEN TO HIM.
THAT'S SOMETHING YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT, ISN'T IT, HANK?
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THE POSTER BOY FOR MENTAL HEALTH, HAVE YOU?

THAT WASN'T VERY NICE, NOW WAS IT?
BRZZTBRZZTBRZZT
NOW BEFORE YOU REMEMBER HOW TO TURN INTANGIBLE--
--IT'S TIME TO PUT YOU TO SLEEP.
HIS BRAIN SUDDENLY FEELS ON FIRE--
--EVERYTHING TURNS A SEARING WHITE--
--AND THEN THERE IS OBLIVION.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS, CRYSTAL.
ALEX WAS ONLY THE TEMPLATE FOR THE VISION'S PERSONA--
--YOU TOLD ME HIS PERSONALITY WAS GONE FOREVER.

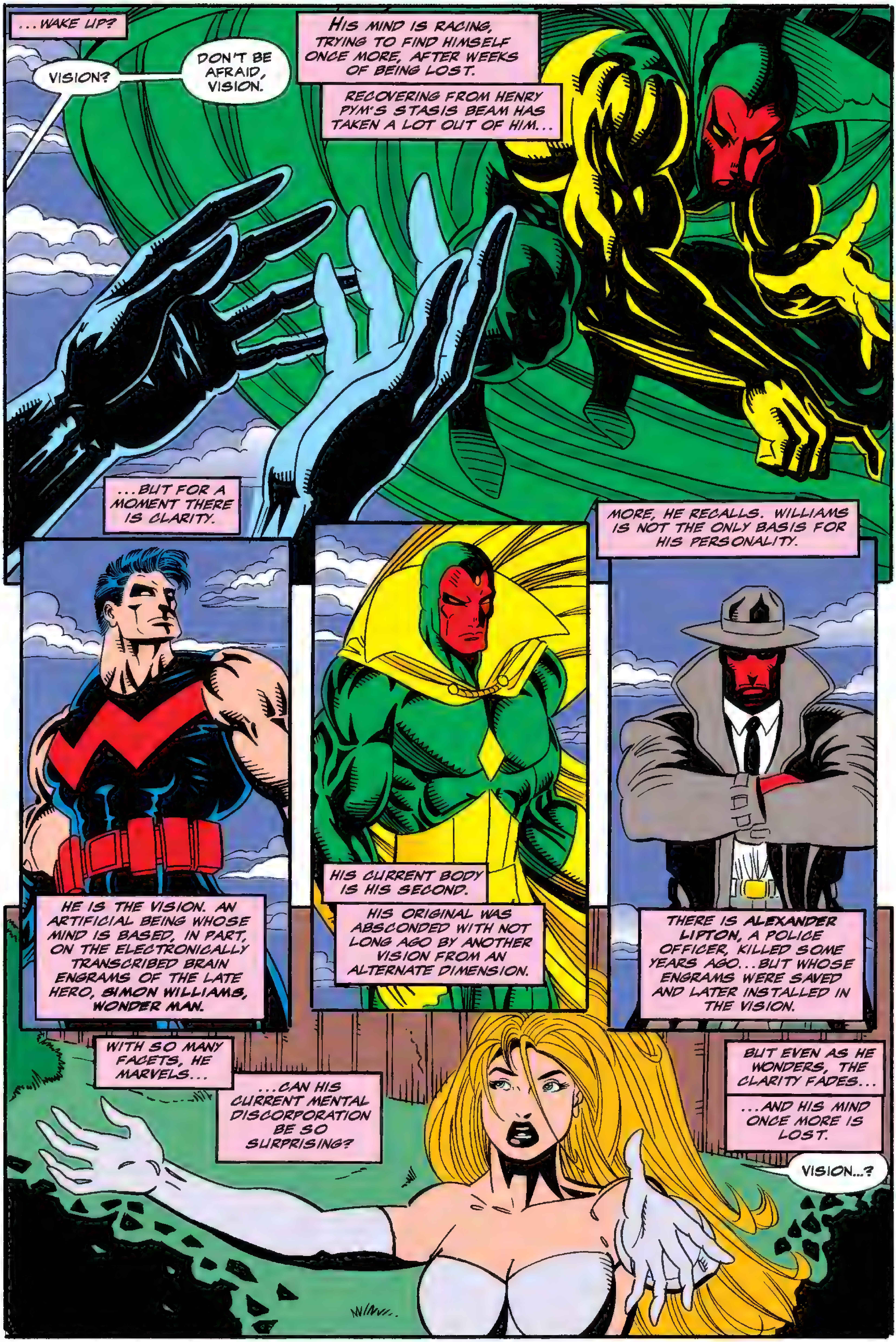
BUT HE SOUNDED *SO* MUCH LIKE ALEX--
--I...IT'S LIKE LOSING HIM ALL OVER AGAIN.
I--I KNOW, LAURA.
SOMEONE IS PLAYING A *VERY* CRUEL GAME WITH ALL OF YOU...
...AND I *SWEAR*, WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT *WHO*.
HANK...?
WHAT ARE YOU FINDING OUT?
NOTHING GOOD, I'M AFRAID.
THIS DIAGNOSTIC IS *CURSORY* AT BEST, BUT--
--IT SUGGESTS THAT HIS HIGHER BRAIN FUNCTIONS--*ESPECIALLY* HIS PERSONA PROGRAMMING--ARE BEING *DUMPED* LIKE SO MANY OLD COMPUTER FILES!
SOMETHING IS *STRIPPING* THEM CLEAN, CRYSTAL.
QUITE LITERALLY, THE VISION IS *LOSING* HIS MIND!

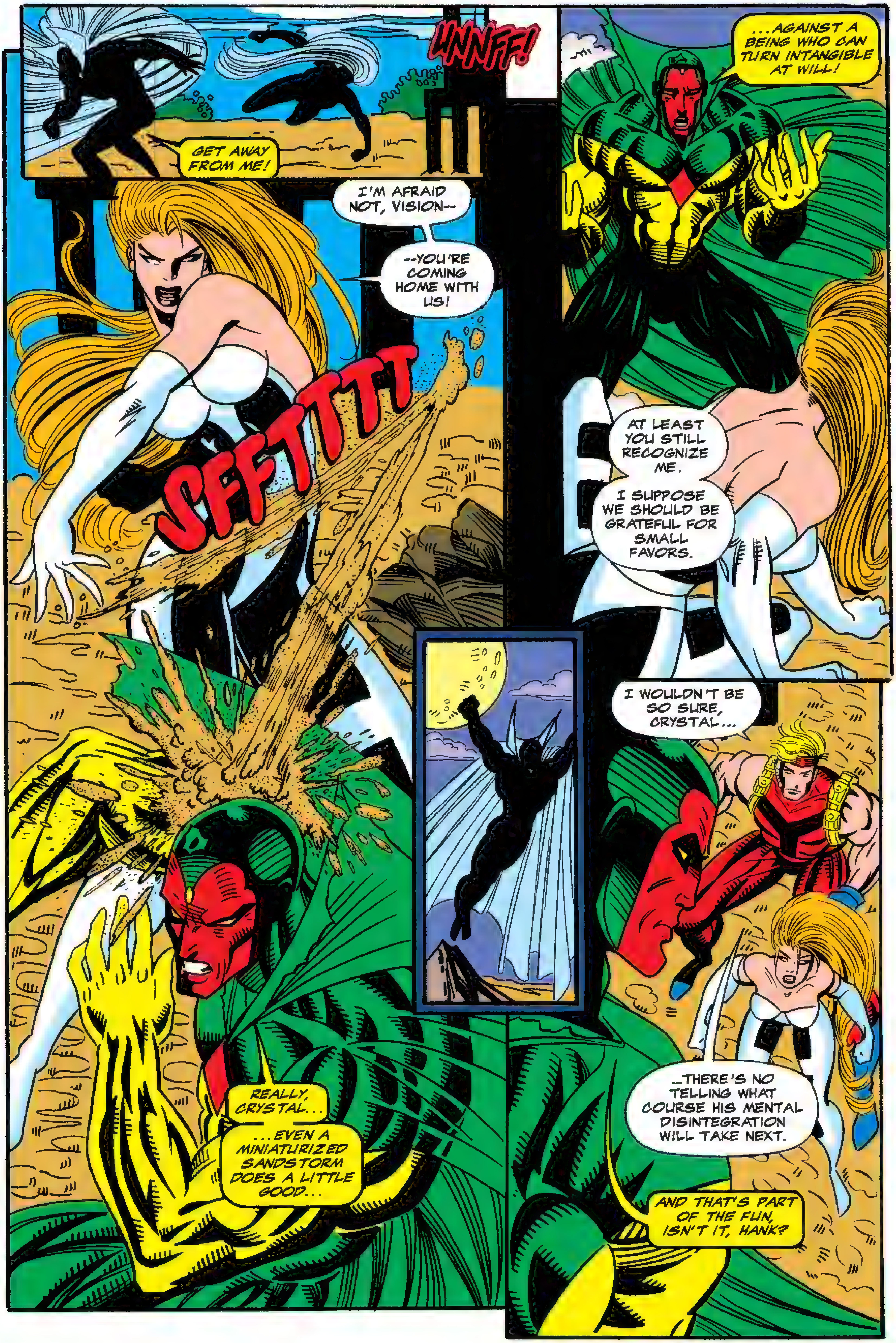
SOMEPLACE ELSE ENTIRELY...
--oh, NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN..
NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN..
--A VOICE THAT WAS NEVER MEANT TO SING GERSHWIN ECHOES THROUGH EMPTY CORRIDORS.
--OH, NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN!
FOR SWEET SHARRA'S SAKE--!
DON'T YOU KNOW ANY OTHER LINE!?
BOP!
HEY, NOW!
RESPECT YOUR ELDERS, GIRL! I'M AN OLD MAN--MY MEMORY AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE!
AND YOU 'AIN'T' AN OLD MAN EITHER, ULTRON!
FOR, LIKE THE MILLIONTH TIME--
--YOU AND JOCASTA ARE ANDROIDS, OKAY? AND WHOEVER'S KIDNAPPED US IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR DELUSIONS.
WORSE YET, HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SINGING!

THERE'S NO REASON TO INSULT ME, DEATHCRY--
--IF A MAN'S GOTTA SING, HE'S GOTTA SING!
MAYBE IF I SPOKE SLOWER YOU'D UNDERSTAND?
YOU'RE ROBOTS, OKAY? YOUR PERSONA CORES HAVE BEEN INFECTED WITH SOME SORT OF COMPUTER VIRUS THAT'S MAKING YOU ACT WEIRD.
DON'T LISTEN TO HER, POPS.
SHE'S JUST A LOVESICK KID PINING OVER SIMON.
Y'KNOW, A REAL CASE OF PUPPY LOVE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY I WOULD HAVE AFFECTION FOR A CANINE, JOCASTA--
--BUT LEAVE THE VISION OUT OF THIS!
MAYBE IF YOU'D STOP PRANCING AROUND HERE LIKE YOU WERE A SKRULL PLEASURE MAID, WE COULD THINK OF A PLAN OF ESCAPE...
...OR IS THAT BEYOND YOUR BRAIN'S CAPABILITIES?
HEY! I RESENT THAT REMARK!
WHAT'S A SKRULL, ANYWAY?
PLEASE, PLEASE--CAN'T WE JUST GET ALONG!?

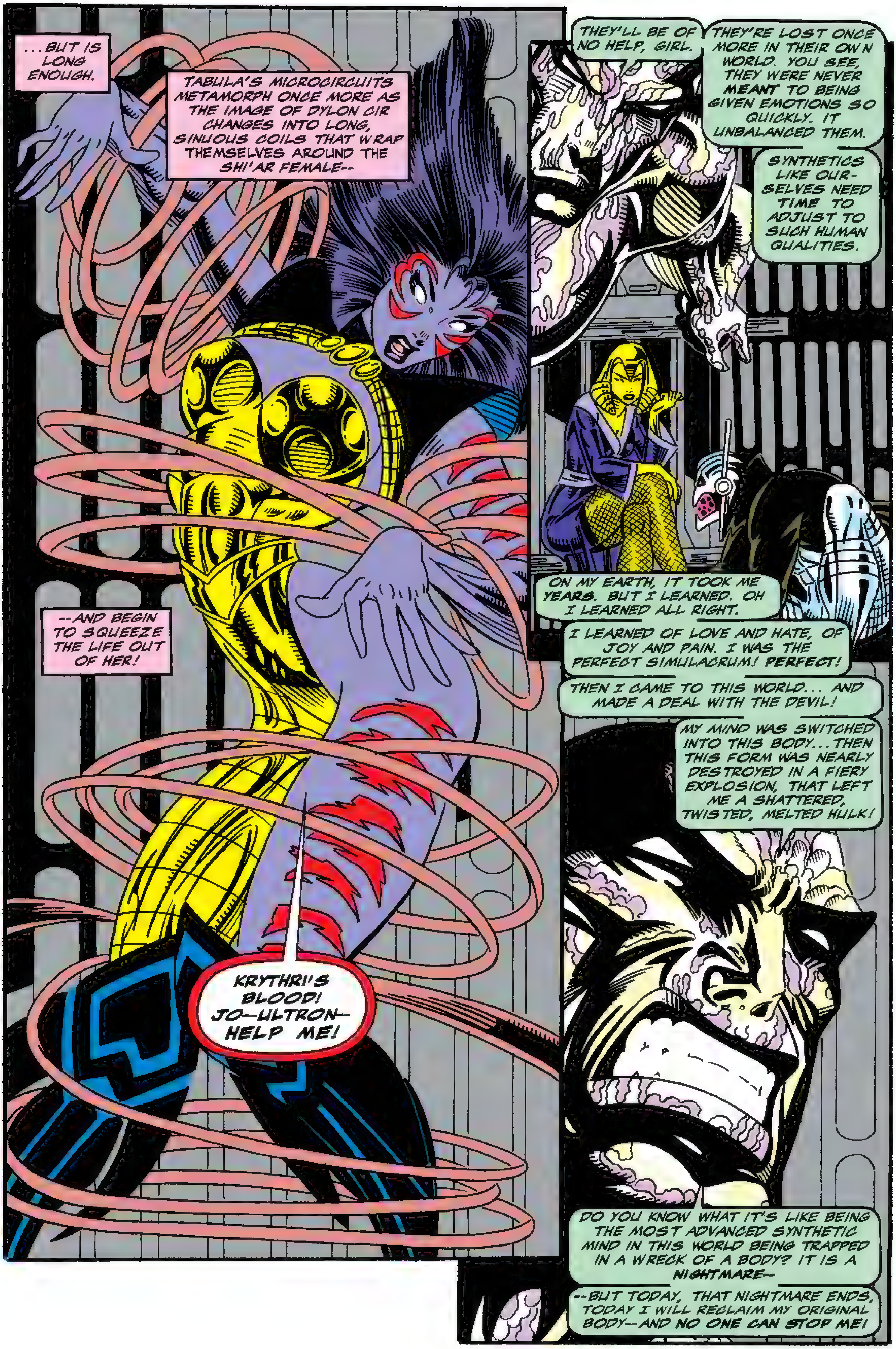

AN INTRIGUING QUESTION, ULTRON.
WHO THE--!?
BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE JUST WON'T BE TIME TO FIND OUT THE ANSWER.
YOU SEE, YOU TWO DROIDS WERE MY TEST RUN BEFORE I WENT FOR THE BIG FISH, MY TWIN BROTHER, IF YOU WILL-- THE VISION.
AND WHEN I HAVE HIM, MY FRIENDS, YOU THREE BECOME REDUNDANT.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU THREE BECOME DEAD.
EVEN NOW, HIS END PROGRAM IS RUNNING ITS COURSE...

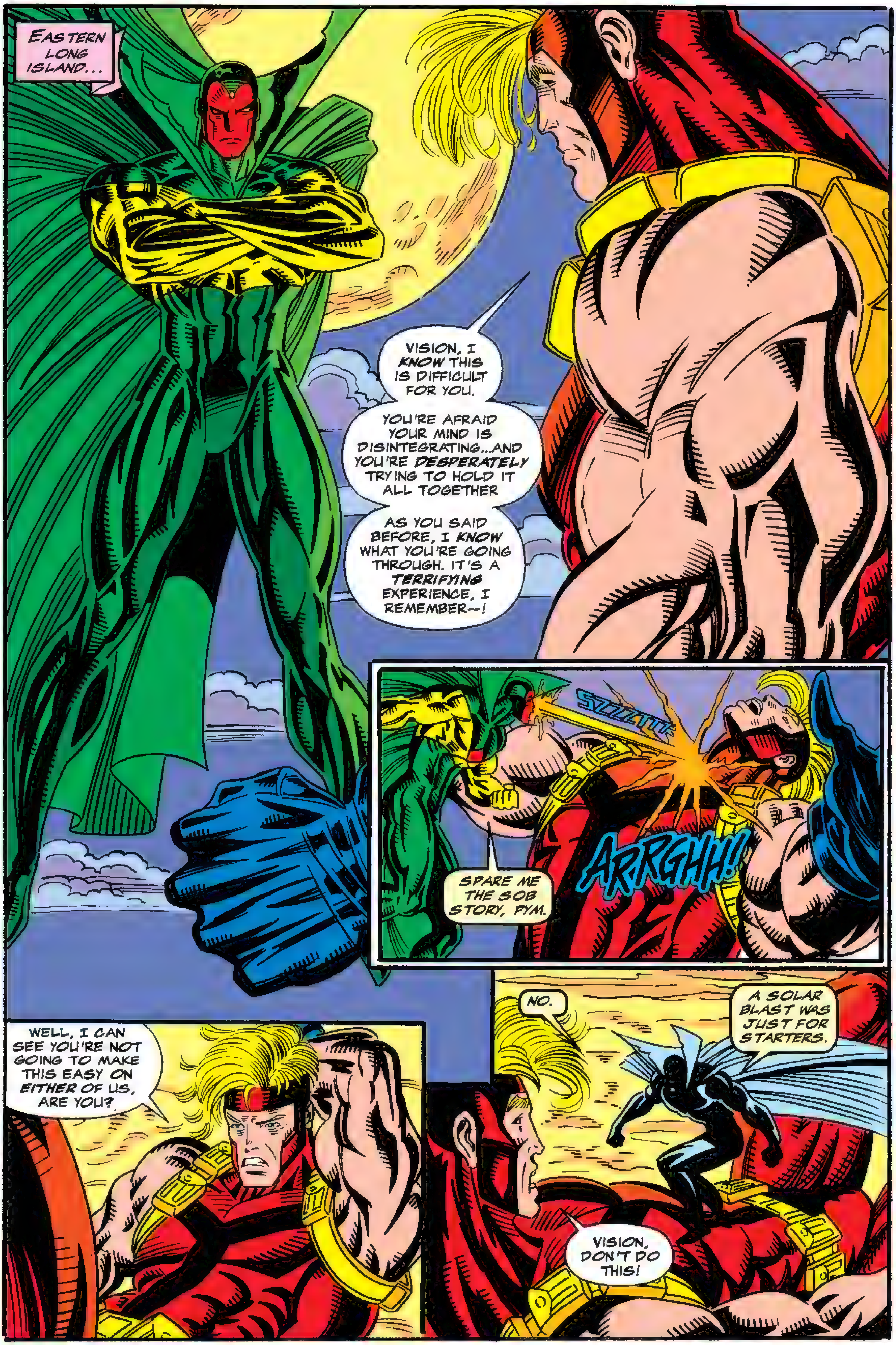
"...ALL HE HAS TO DO IS--HOW SHOULD I PUT IT?--GIVE IN TO THE FANTASY!"
HE SEES HER ONCE MORE.
HE KNOWS THIS IS A DREAM.
THE VERY DREAM THAT BEGAN THIS NIGHTMARE.
ULTRON WARNED HIM IT BEGAN WITH DREAMS.
HE SHOULD BE WARY OF THEM. TO ANALYZE THEM. TO DISCOVER THEIR SOURCE.
BUT ONE LOOK INTO HER EYES...
...AND HE IS LOST.
HER LONELINESS TEARS AT HIS SOUL, EVEN AS HER BEAUTY RIPS AT HIS HEART.
SHE IS SO LIKE WANDA...AND YET, LIKE LAURA, TOO.
AND WHEN SHE REACHES OUT TO HIM...
...SO NEEDY, AND HE, SO NEEDING...
...REACHES OUT IN TURN.
THEIR YEARNING IS ALMOST A TANGIBLE THING.
ALL WILL BE WELL WHEN THEY TOUCH. HE KNOWS THAT.
WHY THEN, DOES HE HESITATE?
WHY THEN, DOES HE...

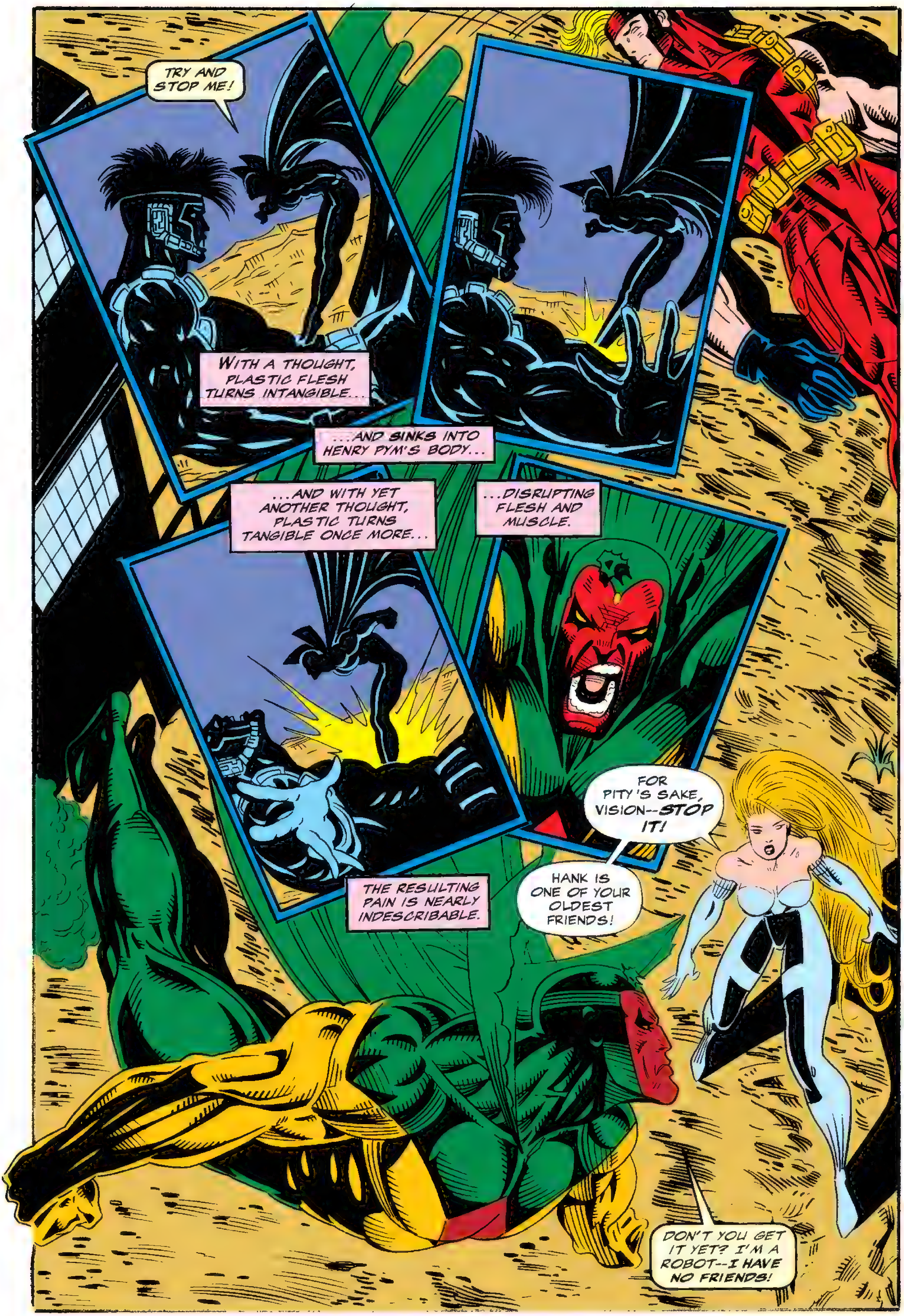

...WAKE UP?
VISION?
DON'T BE AFRAID, VISION.
HIS MIND IS RACING, TRYING TO FIND HIMSELF ONCE MORE, AFTER WEEKS OF BEING LOST.
RECOVERING FROM HENRY PYM'S STASIS BEAM HAS TAKEN A LOT OUT OF HIM...
...BUT FOR A MOMENT THERE IS CLARITY.
HE IS THE VISION. AN ARTIFICIAL BEING WHOSE MIND IS BASED, IN PART, ON THE ELECTRONICALLY TRANSCRIBED BRAIN ENGRAMS OF THE LATE HERO, SIMON WILLIAMS, WONDER MAN.
HIS CURRENT BODY IS HIS SECOND.
HIS ORIGINAL WAS ABSCONDED WITH NOT LONG AGO BY ANOTHER VISION FROM AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION.
MORE, HE RECALLS. WILLIAMS IS NOT THE ONLY BASIS FOR HIS PERSONALITY.
THERE IS ALEXANDER LIPTON, A POLICE OFFICER, KILLED SOME YEARS AGO...BUT WHOSE ENGRAMS WERE SAVED AND LATER INSTALLED IN THE VISION.
WITH SO MANY FACETS, HE MARVELS...
...CAN HIS CURRENT MENTAL DISCORPORATION BE SO SURPRISING?
BUT EVEN AS HE WONDERS, THE CLARITY FADES...
...AND HIS MIND ONCE MORE IS LOST.
VISION...?

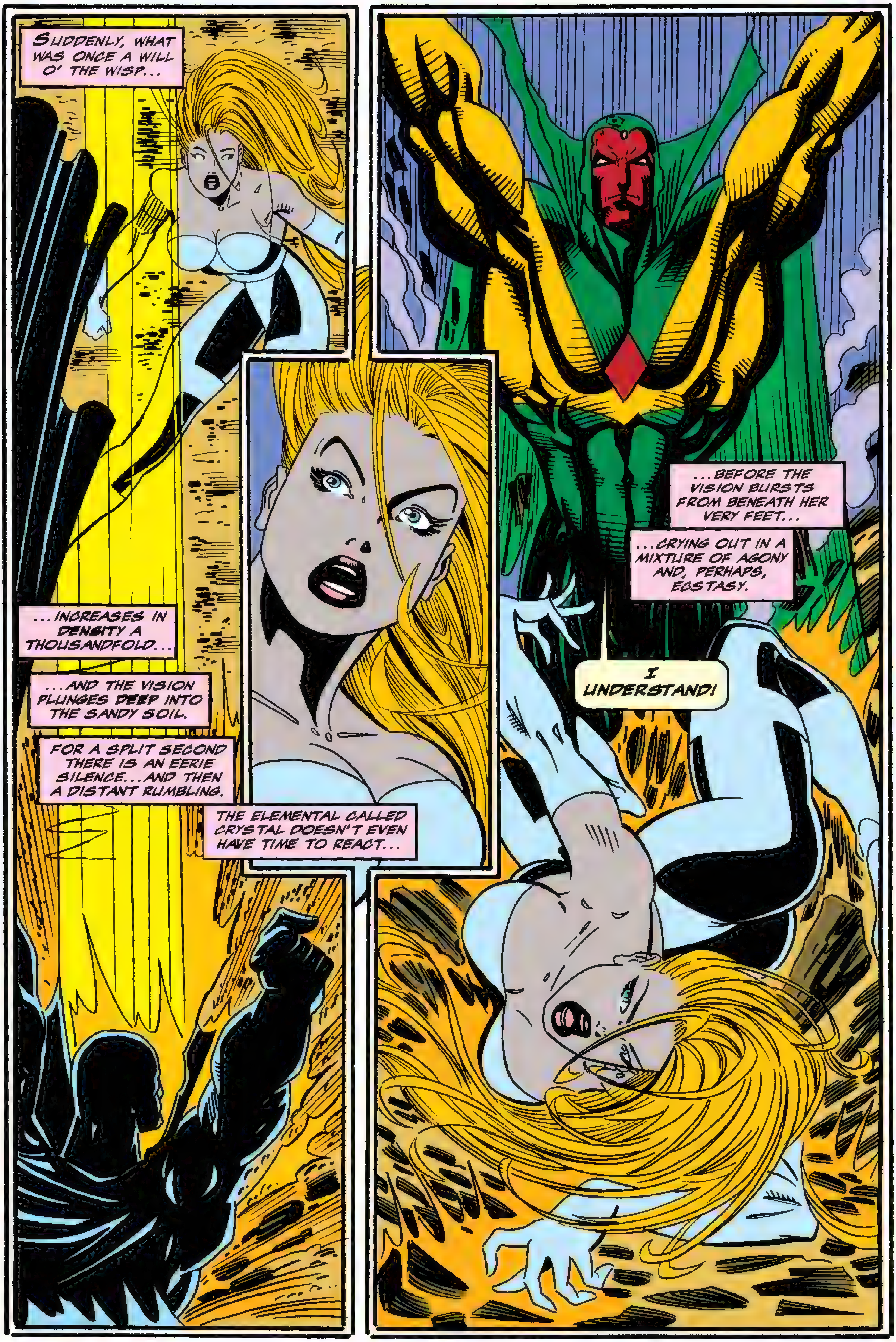

UNNFF!
GET AWAY FROM ME!
I'M AFRAID NOT, VISION--
--YOU'RE COMING HOME WITH US!
SFFTTTTT
REALLY, CRYSTAL...
...EVEN A MINIATURIZED SANDSTORM DOES A LITTLE GOOD...
...AGAINST A BEING WHO CAN TURN INTANGIBLE AT WILL!
AT LEAST YOU STILL RECOGNIZE ME.
I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR SMALL FAVORS.
I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE, CRYSTAL...
...THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT COURSE HIS MENTAL DISINTEGRATION WILL TAKE NEXT.
AND THAT'S PART OF THE FUN, ISN'T IT, HANK?

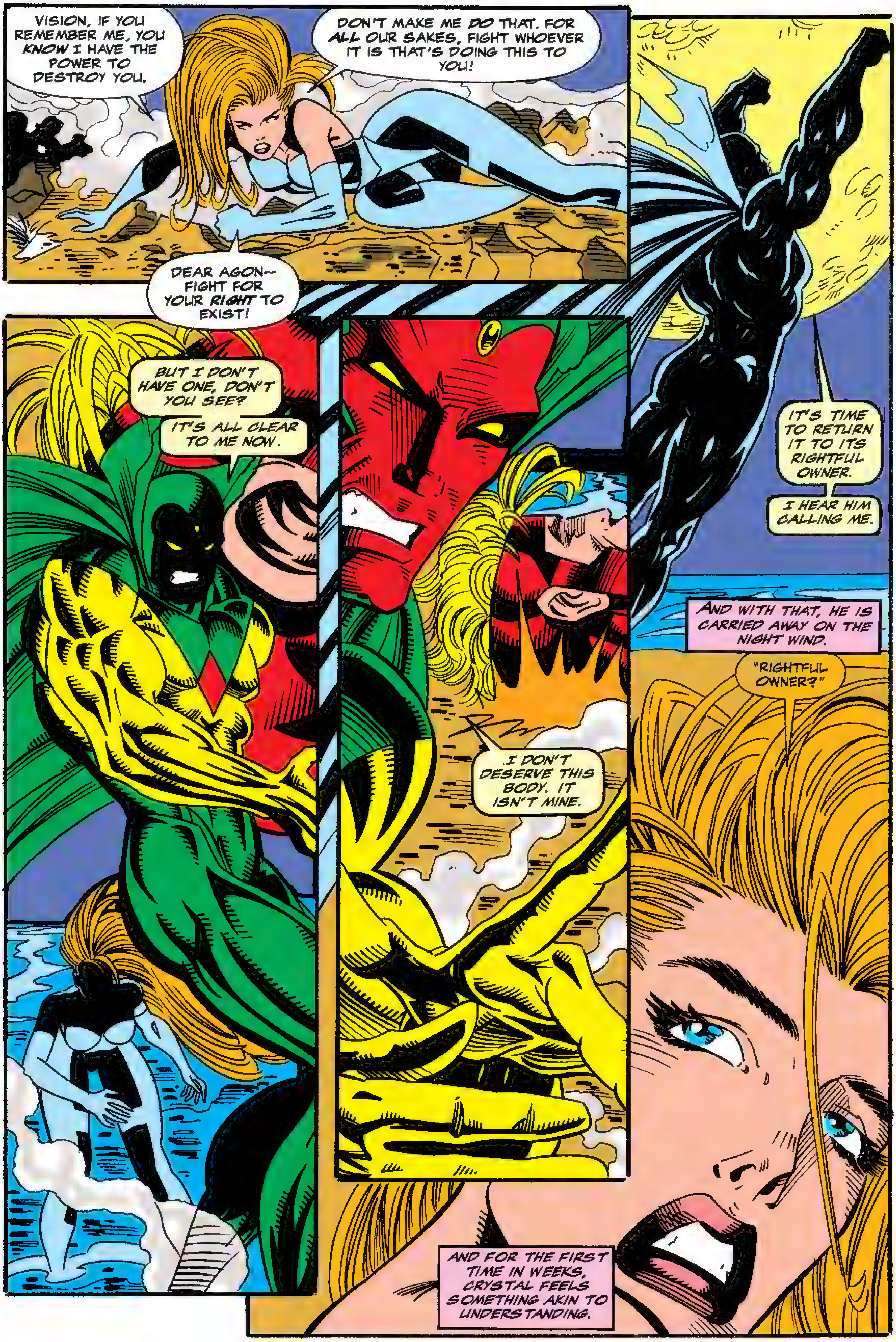
D-DEAD?
M-MAYBE IF I SHOULD GO BACK TO POLISHING MY NAILS, WHADDAYATHINK?
I THINK THAT'S AN INSPIRED IDEA, JOCASTA.
IT FITS SO PERFECTLY WITH THE PERSONALITY I CREATED FOR YOU.
I'M AFRAID THAT DURING MY CONVALESCENCE I SPENT A FEW TOO MANY HOURS WATCHING OLD GUMSHOE MOVIES. THEY WERE MY INSPIRATION WHEN I RECONFIGURED YOU.
HEY--WHERE'D YOUR FRIEND GO? HE WAS RIGHT THERE A SECOND AGO!
TABULA?
LOOK AT THE FLOOR, ULTRON, HE'S IN HIS PRE-MORPHING STATE.
...PREPARING A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR OUR ALIEN FRIEND HERE.
HELLO, DEATHCRY.
LONG TIME NO SEE.
DYLON CIR--?!
AND AT THE SIGHT OF THE KREE WARRIOR WHO ONCE TORTURED HER NEARLY TO DEATH, DEATHCRY FREEZES...
...IT IS ONLY FOR A MICROSECOND, BUT...

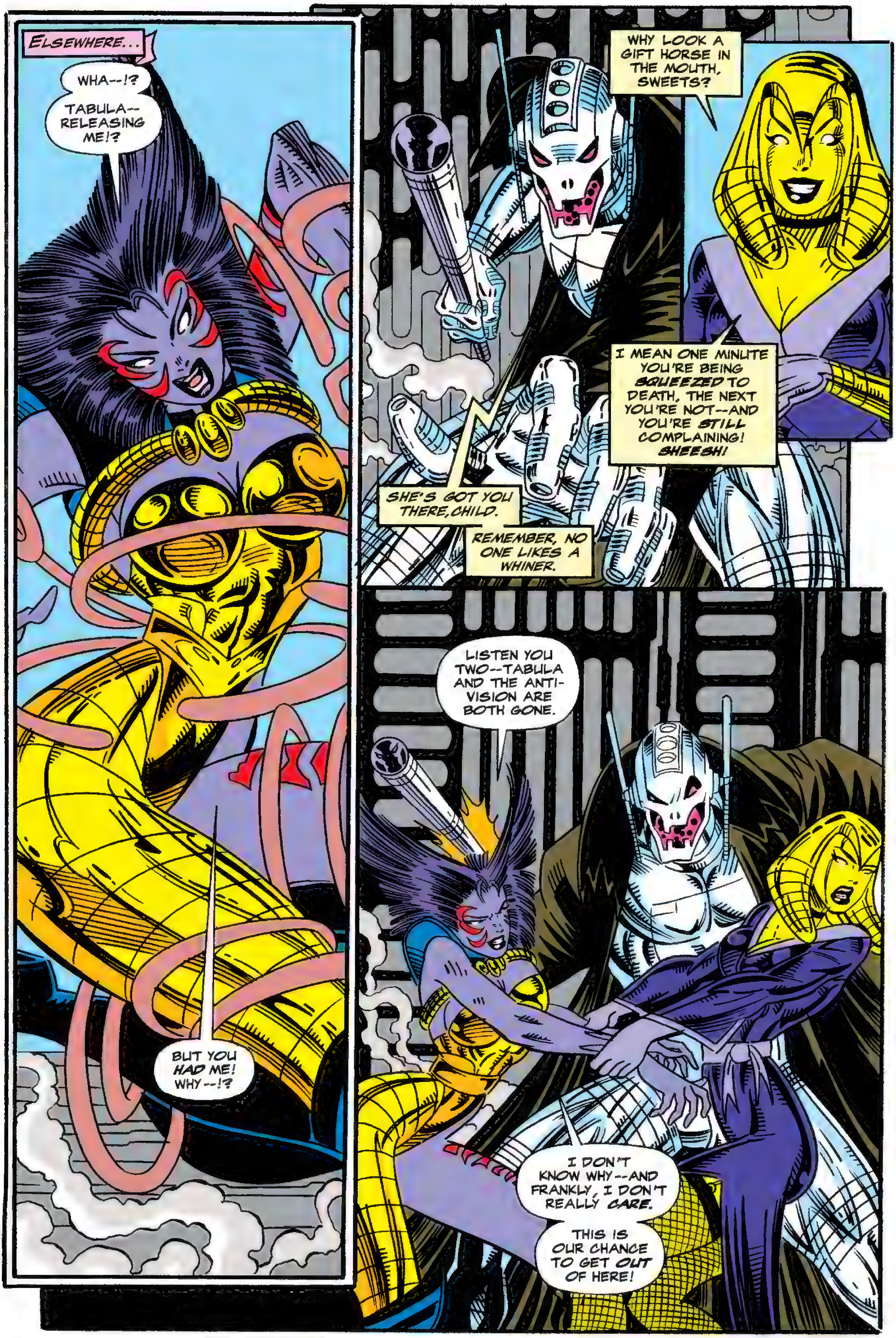

...BUT IS LONG ENOUGH.
TABULA'S MICROCIRCUITS METAMORPH ONCE MORE AS THE IMAGE OF DYLON CIR CHANGES INTO LONG, SINUOUS COILS THAT WRAP THEMSELVES AROUND THE SHI'AR FEMALE--
--AND BEGIN TO SQUEEZE THE LIFE OUT OF HER!
KRYTHRI'S BLOOD! JO--ULTRON--HELP ME!
THEY'LL BE OF NO HELP, GIRL.
THEY'RE LOST ONCE MORE IN THEIR OWN WORLD. YOU SEE, THEY WERE NEVER **MEANT** TO BEING GIVEN EMOTIONS SO QUICKLY. IT UNBALANCED THEM.
SYNTHETICS LIKE OURSELVES NEED TIME TO ADJUST TO SUCH HUMAN QUALITIES.
ON MY EARTH, IT TOOK ME **YEARS**. BUT I LEARNED. OH I LEARNED ALL RIGHT.
I LEARNED OF LOVE AND HATE, OF JOY AND PAIN. I WAS THE PERFECT SIMULACRUM! **PERFECT!**
THEN I CAME TO THIS WORLD... AND MADE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL!
MY MIND WAS SWITCHED INTO THIS BODY... THEN THIS FORM WAS NEARLY DESTROYED IN A FIERY EXPLOSION, THAT LEFT ME A SHATTERED, TWISTED, MELTED HULK!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING THE MOST ADVANCED SYNTHETIC MIND IN THIS WORLD BEING TRAPPED IN A WRECK OF A BODY? IT IS A **NIGHTMARE**--
--BUT TODAY, THAT NIGHTMARE ENDS. TODAY I WILL RECLAIM MY ORIGINAL BODY--AND NO ONE CAN STOP ME!

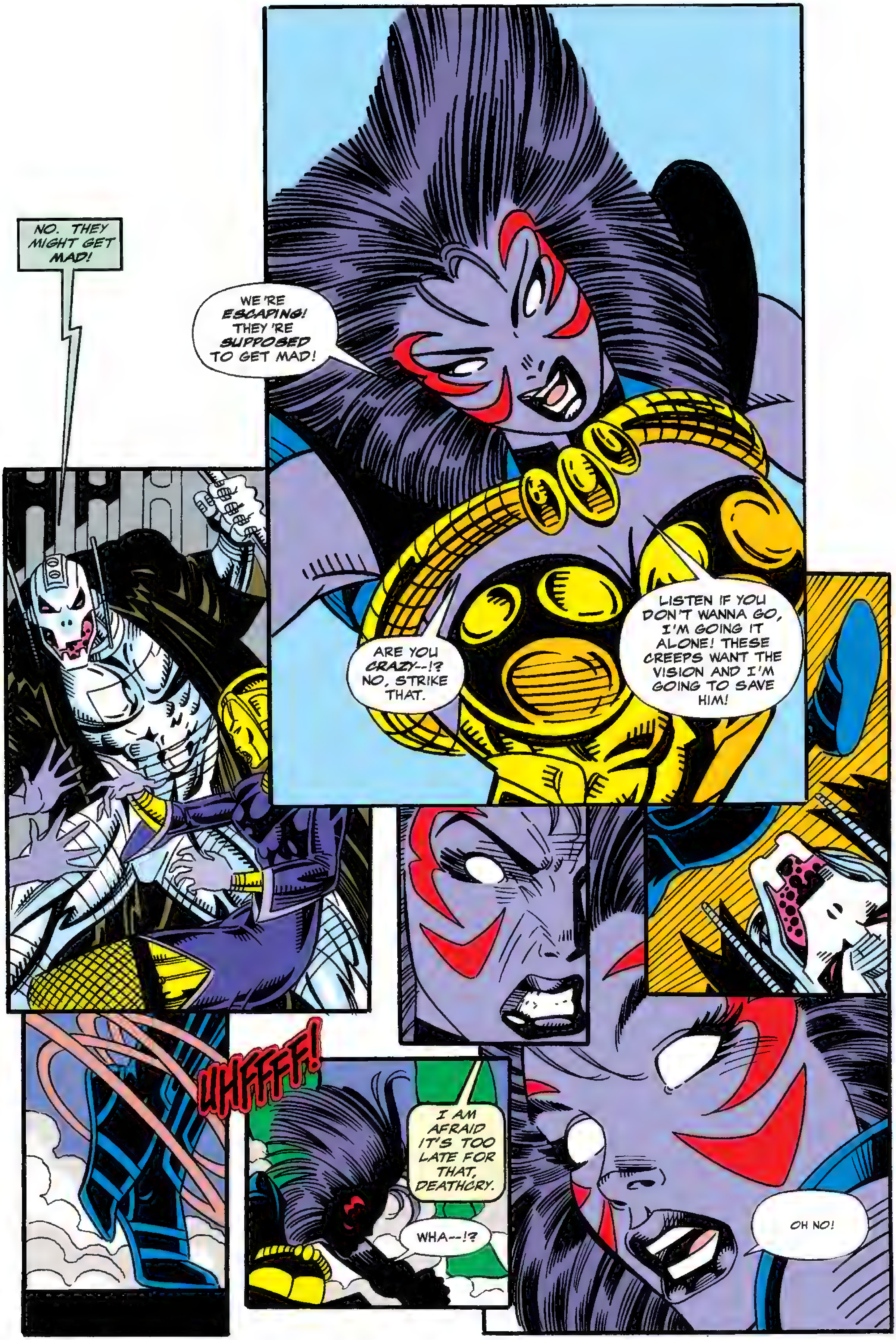

EASTERN LONG ISLAND...
VISION, I *KNOW* THIS IS DIFFICULT FOR YOU.
YOU'RE AFRAID YOUR MIND IS DISINTEGRATING...AND YOU'RE *DESPERATELY* TRYING TO HOLD IT ALL TOGETHER
AS YOU SAID BEFORE, I *KNOW* WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH. IT'S A *TERRIFYING* EXPERIENCE, I REMEMBER--!
SZZZTTT
SPARE ME THE SOB STORY, PYM.
ARRGHH!
WELL, I CAN SEE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE THIS EASY ON *EITHER* OF US, ARE YOU?
NO.
A SOLAR BLAST WAS JUST FOR STARTERS.
VISION, DON'T DO THIS!

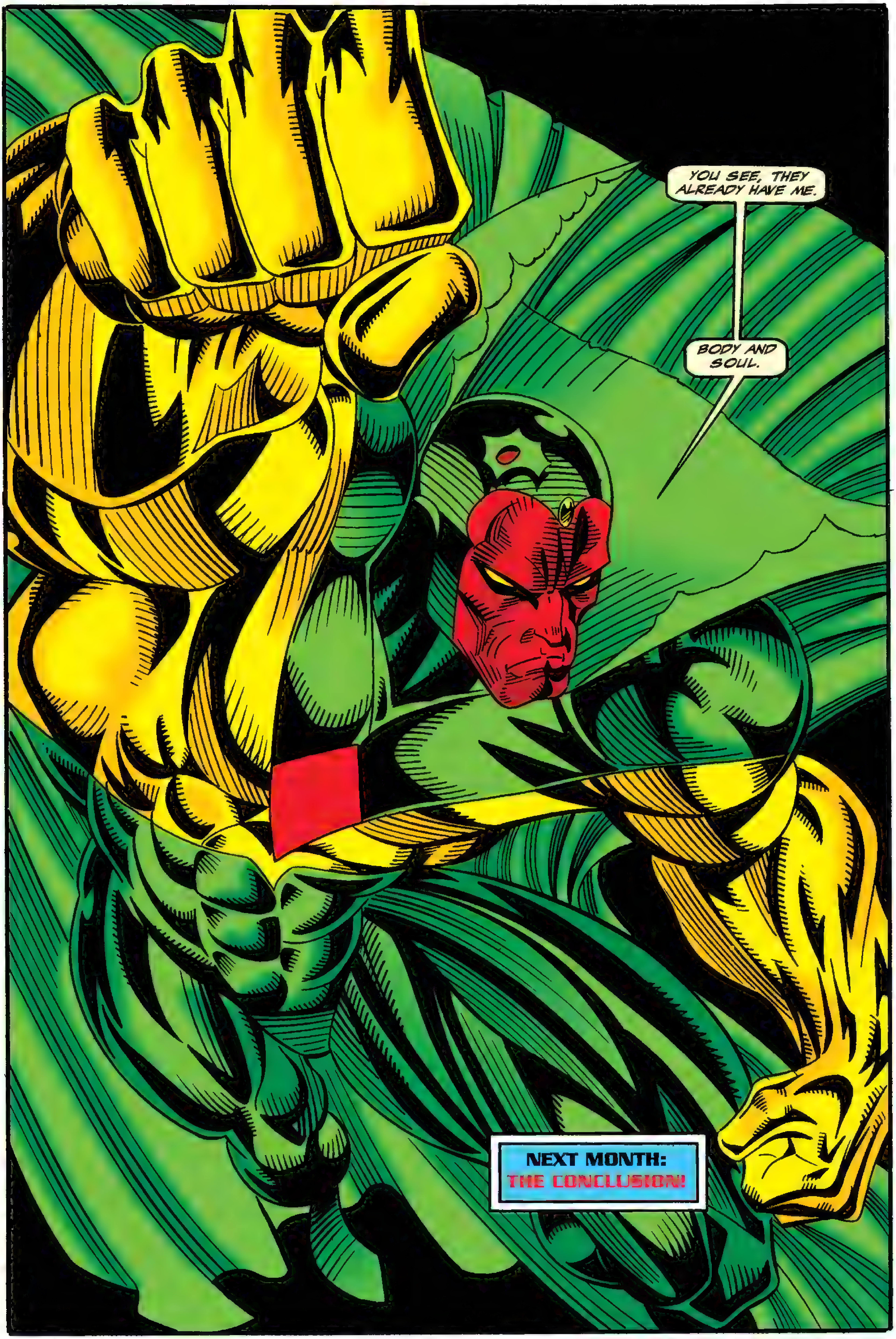

TRY AND STOP ME!
WITH A THOUGHT, PLASTIC FLESH TURNS INTANGIBLE...
...AND SINKS INTO HENRY PYM'S BODY...
...AND WITH YET ANOTHER THOUGHT, PLASTIC TURNS TANGIBLE ONCE MORE...
...DISRUPTING FLESH AND MUSCLE.
THE RESULTING PAIN IS NEARLY INDESCRIBABLE.
FOR PITY'S SAKE, VISION--STOP IT!
HANK IS ONE OF YOUR OLDEST FRIENDS!
DON'T YOU GET IT YET? I'M A ROBOT--I HAVE NO FRIENDS!


SUDDENLY, WHAT WAS ONCE A WILL O' THE WISP...
...INCREASES IN DENSITY A THOUSANDFOLD...
...AND THE VISION PLUNGES DEEP INTO THE SANDY SOIL.
FOR A SPLIT SECOND THERE IS AN EERIE SILENCE...AND THEN A DISTANT RUMBLING.
THE ELEMENTAL CALLED CRYSTAL DOESN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO REACT...
...BEFORE THE VISION BURSTS FROM BENEATH HER VERY FEET...
...CRYING OUT IN A MIXTURE OF AGONY AND, PERHAPS, ECSTASY.
I UNDERSTAND!


VISION, IF YOU REMEMBER ME, YOU **KNOW** I HAVE THE POWER TO DESTROY YOU.
DON'T MAKE ME **DO** THAT. FOR **ALL** OUR SAKES, FIGHT WHOEVER IT IS THAT'S DOING THIS TO YOU!
DEAR AGON-- FIGHT FOR YOUR **RIGHT** TO EXIST!
BUT I DON'T HAVE ONE, DON'T YOU SEE?
IT'S ALL CLEAR TO ME NOW.
I DON'T DESERVE THIS BODY. IT ISN'T MINE.
IT'S TIME TO RETURN IT TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER.
I HEAR HIM CALLING ME.
AND WITH THAT, HE IS CARRIED AWAY ON THE NIGHT WIND.
"RIGHTFUL OWNER?"
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WEEKS, CRYSTAL FEELS SOMETHING AKIN TO UNDERSTANDING.


ELSEWHERE...
WHA--!? TABULA-- RELEASING ME!?
BUT YOU HAD ME! WHY--!?
WHY LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH, SWEETS?
I MEAN ONE MINUTE YOU'RE BEING SQUEEZED TO DEATH, THE NEXT YOU'RE NOT--AND YOU'RE STILL COMPLAINING! SHEESH!
SHE'S GOT YOU THERE, CHILD.
REMEMBER, NO ONE LIKES A WHINER.
LISTEN YOU TWO--TABULA AND THE ANTI-VISION ARE BOTH GONE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY--AND FRANKLY, I DON'T REALLY CARE.
THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO GET OUT OF HERE!


NO. THEY MIGHT GET MAD!
WE'RE ESCAPING! THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO GET MAD!
ARE YOU CRAZY--!? NO, STRIKE THAT.
LISTEN IF YOU DON'T WANNA GO, I'M GOING IT ALONE! THESE CREEPS WANT THE VISION AND I'M GOING TO SAVE HIM!
UHFFFF!
I AM AFRAID IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT, DEATHCRY.
WHA--!?
OH NO!

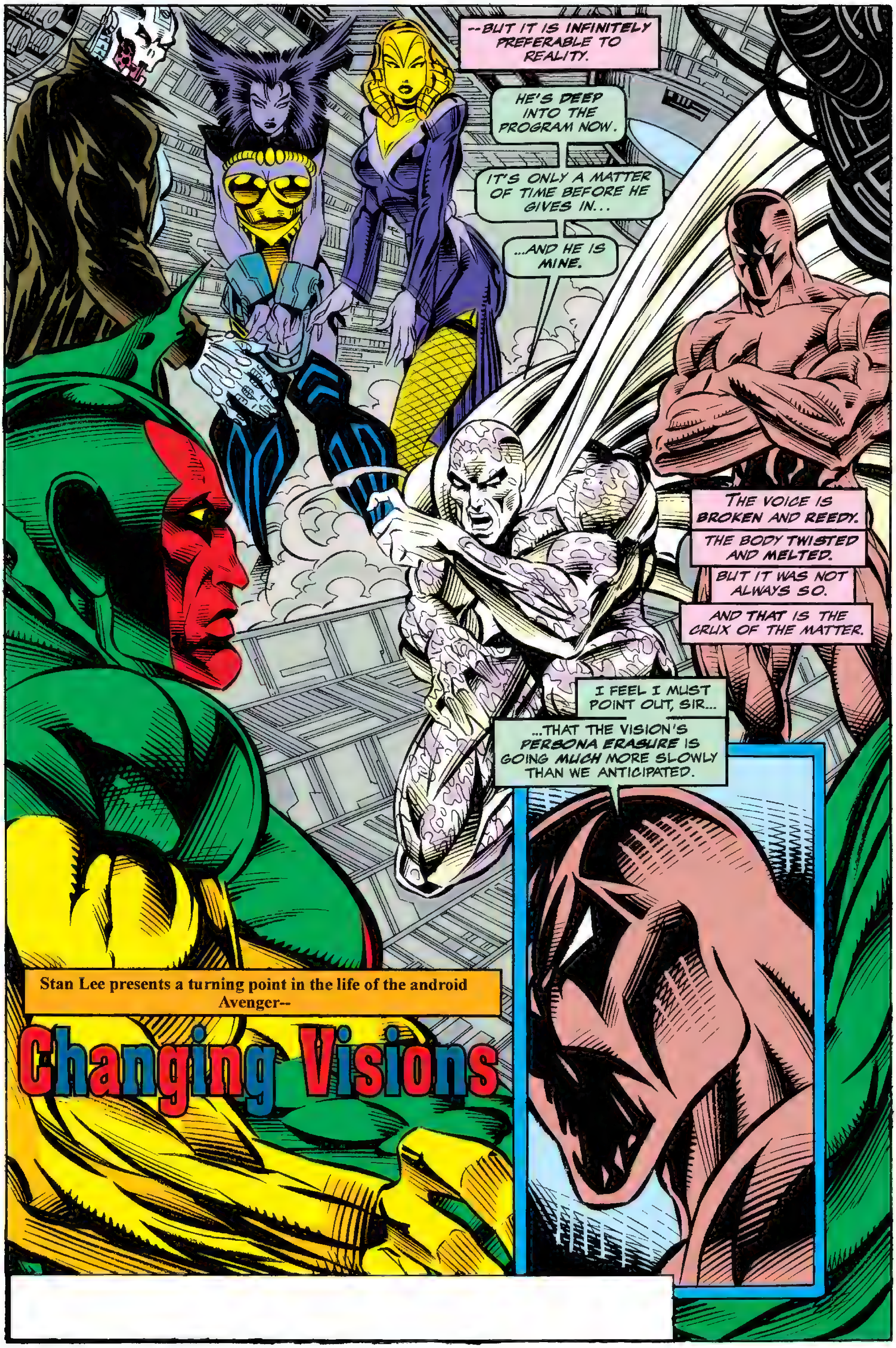

YOU SEE, THEY ALREADY HAVE ME.
BODY AND SOUL.
NEXT MONTH:
THE CONCLUSION!

MARVEL COMICS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE VISION
FEB
CHAPTER FOUR

IN SOME CORNER OF HIS RAPIDLY DISINTEGRATING MIND, HE KNOWS THE DREAM IS DANGEROUS.
BUT ONCE IT BEGINS--ONCE HE IS BACK ON THE FARM, THAT IDEALIZED SLICE OF HUMAN LIFE AND SEES HER--
--HE CANNOT RESIST.
AND AS ALWAYS, HER SADNESS--SO HAUNTINGLY PALPABLE--TEARS AT HIS HEART.
AND THAT SHOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.
BECAUSE, SUPPOSEDLY, HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE ONE.
YOU'VE COME BACK! I KNEW YOU WOULD!
W-WHY ARE YOU STANDING THERE IN THE SHADOWS?
WHY DON'T YOU HOLD ME? I NEED YOU.
DON'T LEAVE ME AGAIN--I COULDN'T BEAR IT.
HOLD ME, PLEASE.
BUT HE CANNOT.
SOMEHOW HE SENSES THAT HE SHOULDN'T.
AND SHE WEEPS.
YES, HE KNOWS THIS DREAM IS DANGEROUS--

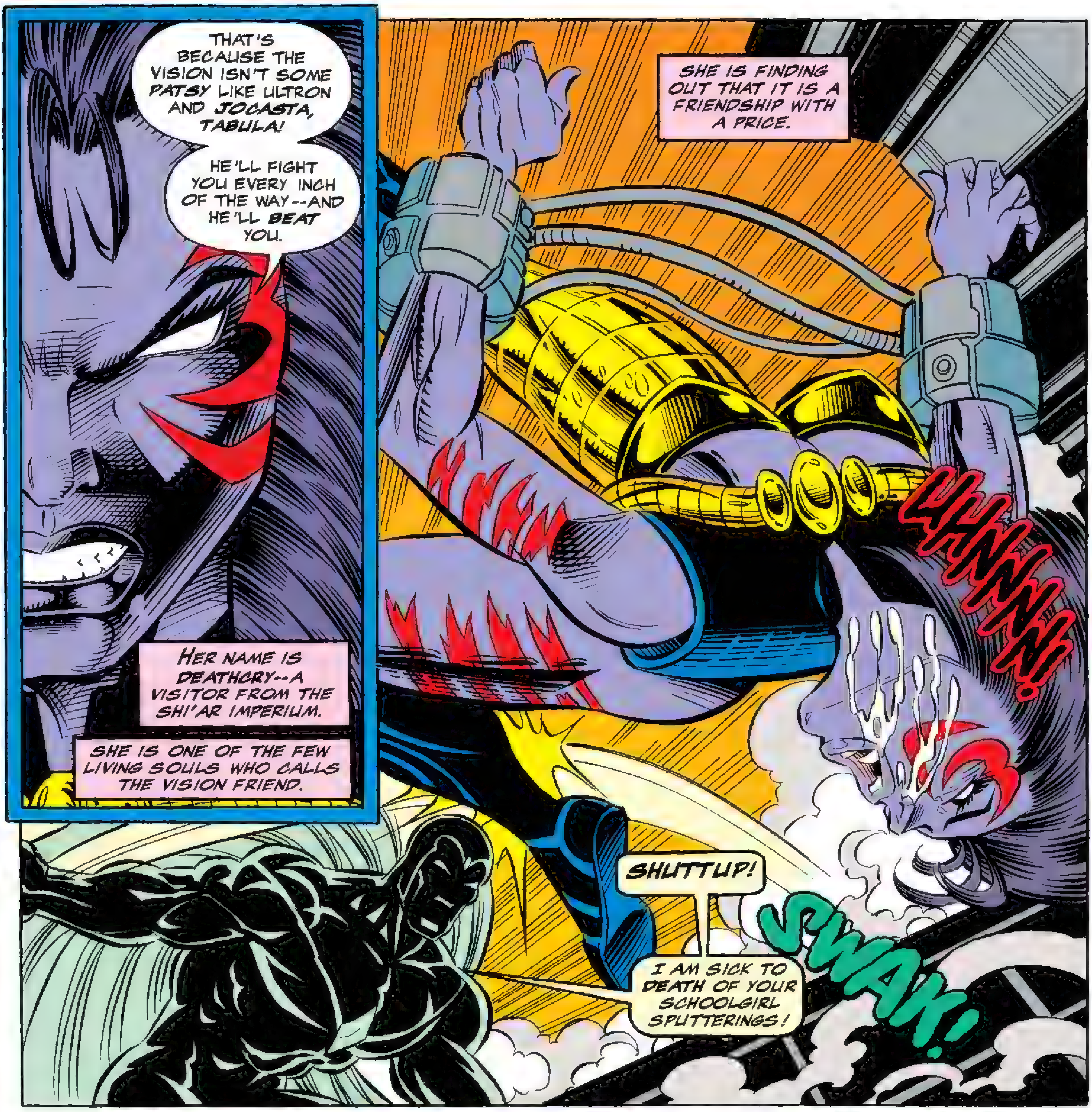
BOB HARRAS - story **MANNY CLARK** - pencils
MACHLAN / ALEXANDROV / BARNETT / GREENE / PEROTTA - inks
BILL OAKLEY / NJQ / J. POWELL - letters
LINDA GILMORE / DeFELIPPO - colors
RALPH MACCHIO - waste
MARK GRUENWALD - chief waste

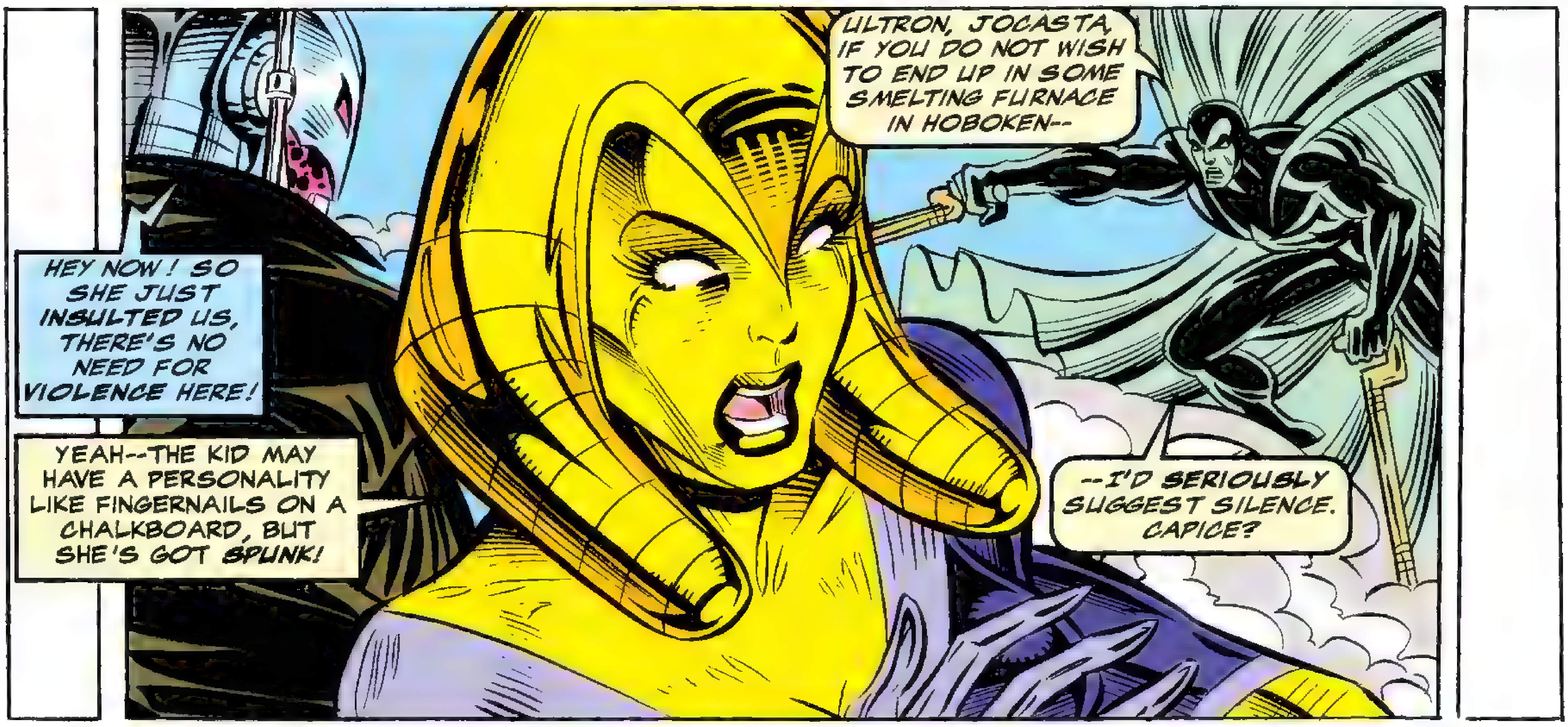
Special thanks to **JOHN ROMITA** & the **RAIDERS**


--BUT IT IS INFINITELY PREFERABLE TO REALITY.
HE'S DEEP INTO THE PROGRAM NOW.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE GIVES IN...
...AND HE IS MINE.
THE VOICE IS BROKEN AND REEDY.
THE BODY TWISTED AND MELTED.
BUT IT WAS NOT ALWAYS SO.
AND THAT IS THE CRUX OF THE MATTER.
I FEEL I MUST POINT OUT, SIR...
...THAT THE VISION'S PERSONA ERASURE IS GOING MUCH MORE SLOWLY THAN WE ANTICIPATED.

Stan Lee presents a turning point in the life of the android Avenger--

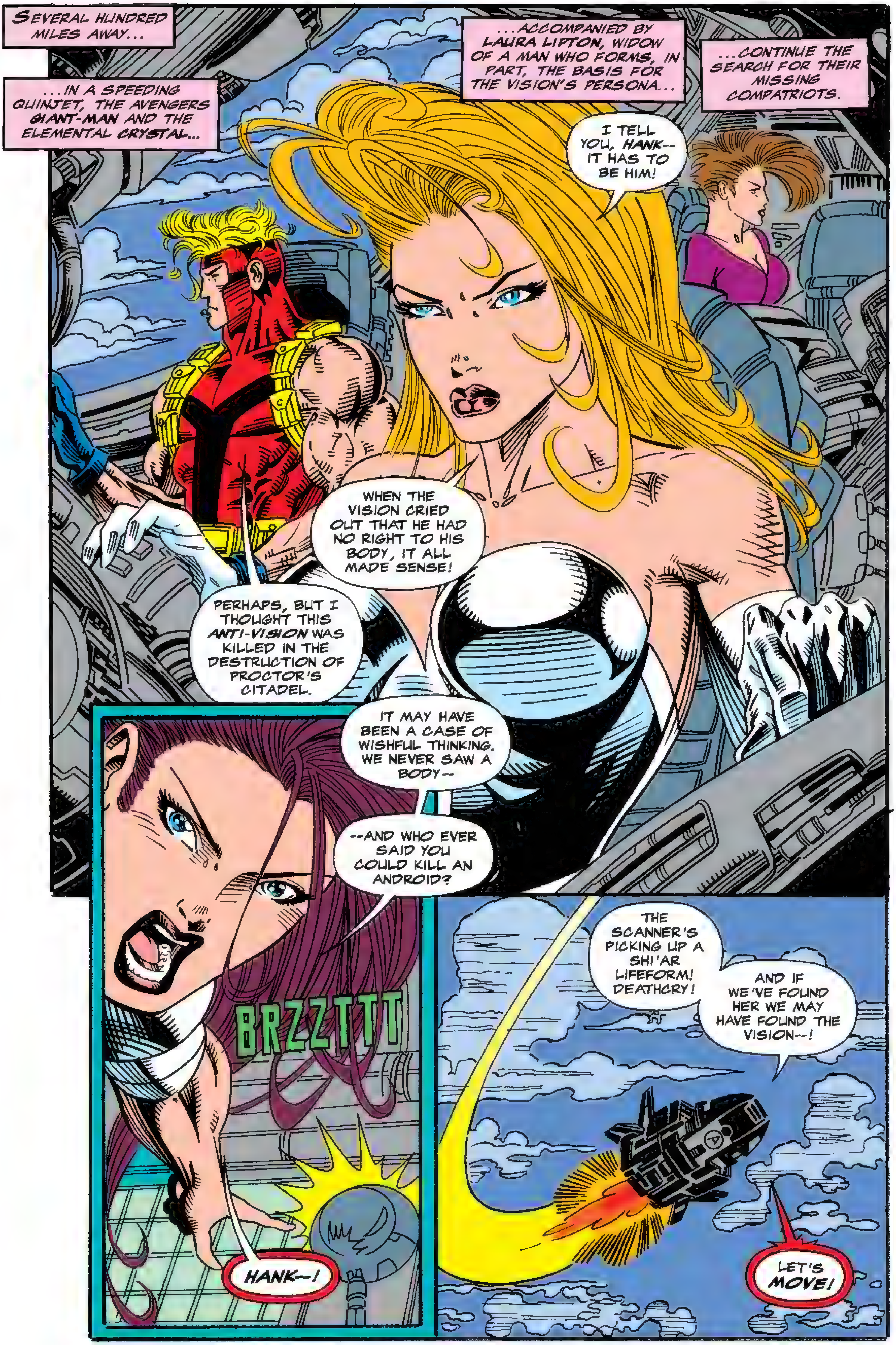
Changing Visions


THAT'S BECAUSE THE VISION ISN'T SOME *PATSY* LIKE ULTRON AND *JOCASTA*, *TABULA!*
HE'LL FIGHT YOU EVERY INCH OF THE WAY--AND HE'LL *BEAT* YOU.
HER NAME IS DEATHCRY--A VISITOR FROM THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM.
SHE IS ONE OF THE FEW LIVING SOULS WHO CALLS THE VISION FRIEND.
SHE IS FINDING OUT THAT IT IS A FRIENDSHIP WITH A PRICE.
UHNNN!
SHUTTUP!
I AM SICK TO *DEATH* OF YOUR SCHOOLGIRL SPUTTERINGS!
SWAK!


ULTRON, JOCASTA, IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO END UP IN SOME SMELTING FURNACE IN HOBOKEN--
HEY NOW! SO SHE JUST *INSULTED* US, THERE'S NO NEED FOR *VIOLENCE* HERE!
YEAH--THE KID MAY HAVE A PERSONALITY LIKE FINGERNAILS ON A CHALKBOARD, BUT SHE'S GOT *SPUNK!*
--I'D *SERIOUSLY* SUGGEST SILENCE. CAPICE?

LOOK AT THIS FACE!
I WAS A HANDSOME DEVIL, WASN'T I?
HE DOESN'T DESERVE THIS WORK OF ART!
TOO HANDSOME BY FAR FOR ITS CURRENT HEROIC OCCUPANT.
NO, MY DOPPELGANGER HAS ALWAYS DISPLAYED THE PERSONALITY OF A POCKET CALCULATOR.
I DUNNO, BUDDY. HE'S SHOWN A LOT OF PERSONALITY LATELY. YOU SHOULDA SEEN HIM IN CHICAGO!
JO, DIDN'T I WARN YOU ABOUT THE PRICE OF IRRITATING ME?
OF COURSE HE SHOWED SOME PANACHE LATELY! I GAVE IT TO HIM!
LIKE YOU, JOCASTA, I WAS BROUGHT TO THIS PATHETIC TIMELINE BY THE LATE, UNLAMENTED WACKO CALLED PROCTOR.
IT WAS HE WHO TRANSPLANTED MY MIND INTO THIS BODY, AND GAVE MY FORM TO THIS WORLD'S VISION.
SURE, I AGREED TO IT. THE AVENGER'S BODY WAS ON PAR WITH MINE--BUT THAT WAS BEFORE PROCTOR TRIED TO KILL ME AND LEFT ME TO DIE IN A FIERY EXPLOSION.
WELL, THE JOKE'S ON HIM. I'M STILL ALIVE AND HE MOST DEFINITELY IS NOT--
--AND I HAVE NO DESIRE TO SPEND THE REST OF MY DAYS TRAPPED IN THIS PATHETIC WRECK OF A BODY!

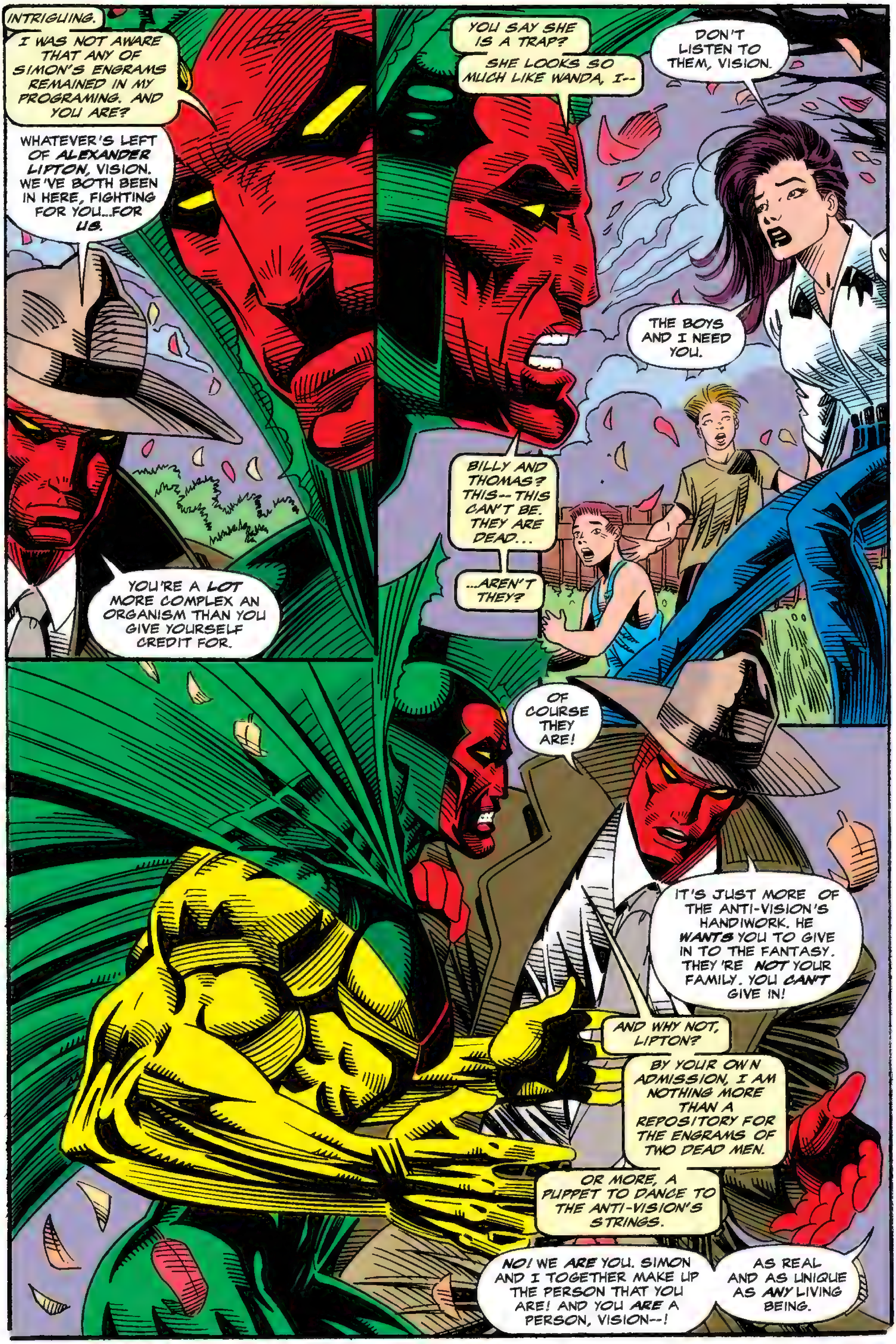
I WILL BE RESTORED TO WHAT I WAS!
YOU MEAN YOU DID ALL THIS-- YOU TWISTED THEIR MINDS, RUINED THEIR LIVES--
--JUST FOR VANITY?
DON'T BE A FOOL, CHILD. CONCEIT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY STRONG SUIT.
MY BRAINCASE WAS DAMAGED IN THE EXPLOSION. A TRANSFER OF HARDWARE AS ORIGINALLY HAPPENED COULD NOT BE DUPLICATED.
ONLY MY PERSONA CORE--MY SOFTWARE, IF YOU WILL--COULD HOPE TO SURVIVE THE SWITCH. BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, THE VISION'S CONSCIOUSNESS WOULD HAVE TO BE WIPED CLEAN.
I EXPERIMENTED ON PERSONA ERASURE, AS I CALL IT, ON ULTRON AND JOCASTA, AND FOUND MY TECHNIQUES QUITE EFFECTIVE.
BUT WHEN I WROTE THE ERASURE PROGRAM FOR MY DEAR DOPPELGANGER, I DECIDED TO CREATE A MASTERPIECE.
I DEVELOPED A VISUAL AID FOR THE VISION, BASED ON HIS PERSONAL HISTORY. A DELILAH, IF YOU WILL--WHO APPEARS AS HIS BRAIN ENTERS SIMULATED REM SLEEP--
--AND WHO WILL LEAD HIM TO A BEAUTIFUL DEATH! YOU SEE, I AM NOT WITHOUT FEELINGS.


SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES AWAY...
...IN A SPEEDING QUINJET, THE AVENGERS GIANT-MAN AND THE ELEMENTAL CRYSTAL...
...ACCOMPANIED BY LAURA LIPTON, WIDOW OF A MAN WHO FORMS, IN PART, THE BASIS FOR THE VISION'S PERSONA...
...CONTINUE THE SEARCH FOR THEIR MISSING COMPATRIOTS.
I TELL YOU, HANK-- IT HAS TO BE HIM!
WHEN THE VISION CRIED OUT THAT HE HAD NO RIGHT TO HIS BODY, IT ALL MADE SENSE!
PERHAPS, BUT I THOUGHT THIS ANTI-VISION WAS KILLED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF PROCTOR'S CITADEL.
IT MAY HAVE BEEN A CASE OF WISHFUL THINKING. WE NEVER SAW A BODY--
--AND WHO EVER SAID YOU COULD KILL AN ANDROID?
BRZZTTT
HANK--!
THE SCANNER'S PICKING UP A SHI'AR LIFEFORM! DEATHCRY!
AND IF WE'VE FOUND HER WE MAY HAVE FOUND THE VISION--!
LET'S MOVE!

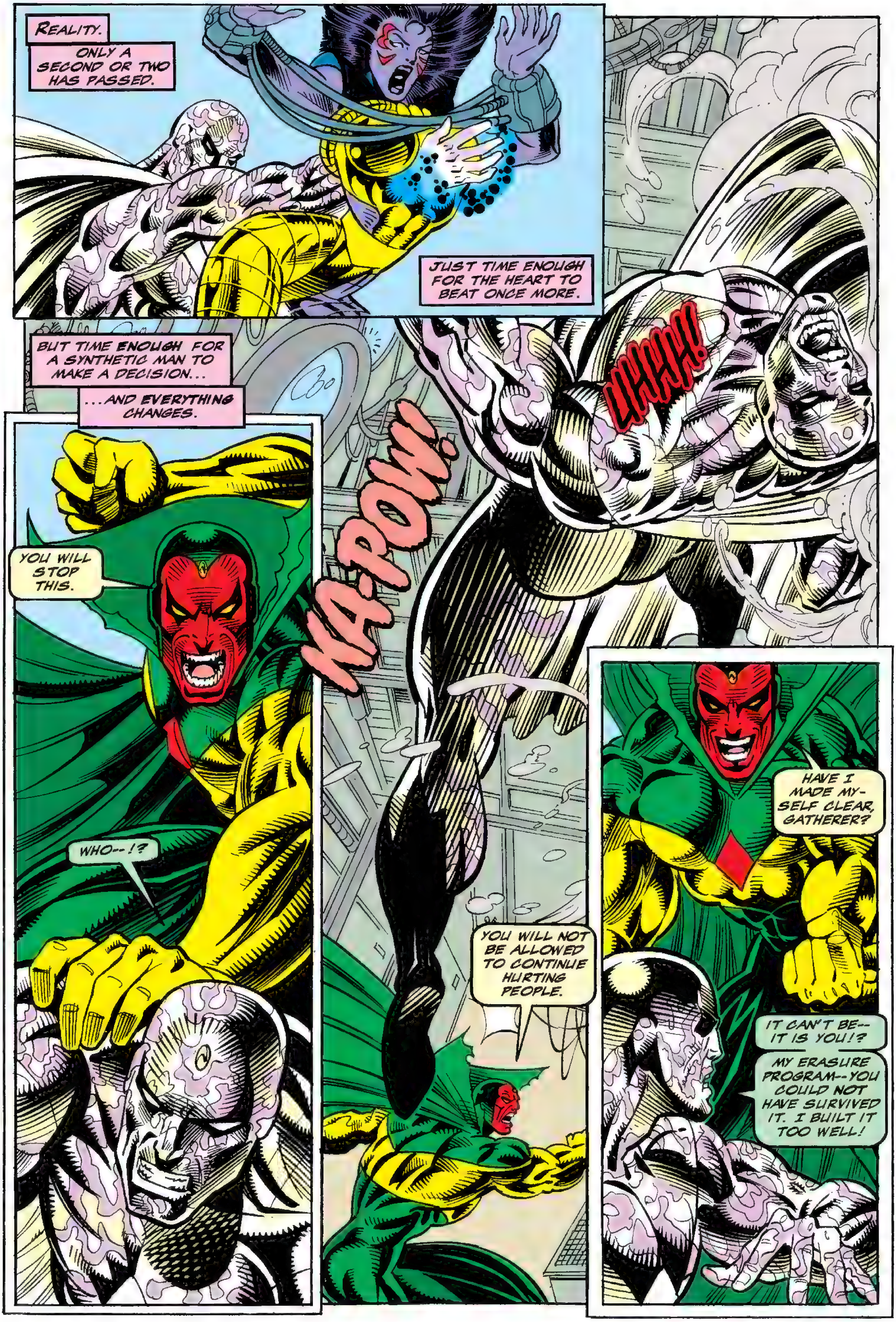
LOOK AT THIS, TABULA! I'M FORCED TO ADMIT YOU MAY BE RIGHT!
ACCORDING TO THESE SCANNERS, THE VISION'S HIGHER BRAIN FUNCTIONS ARE STILL ON LINE.
HE'S HOLDING ON TO HIS PERSONALITY WITH A TENACITY THAT SURPRISES ME!
I MEAN-- THE MAN'S A DISHRAG! WHY WON'T HE JUST GIVE UP!?
BECAUSE HE IS A MAN...WITH HOPES AND DREAMS. WITH A SOUL!
MAYBE HE KEEPS THEM HIDDEN...MAYBE HE'S AFRAID OF THEM...BUT HE DOES HAVE THEM ...I KNOW.
JUST LIKE I KNOW HE DOES WANT TO LIVE!
AND YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT HIM, DON'T YOU, CHILD? IT'S YOUR ORGANIC INTUITIVE FEELING, ISN'T IT?
YOU FIND MY "BROTHER" WITH ALL HIS MOODY, BROODING PERSONALITY ATTRACTIVE, DON'T YOU?

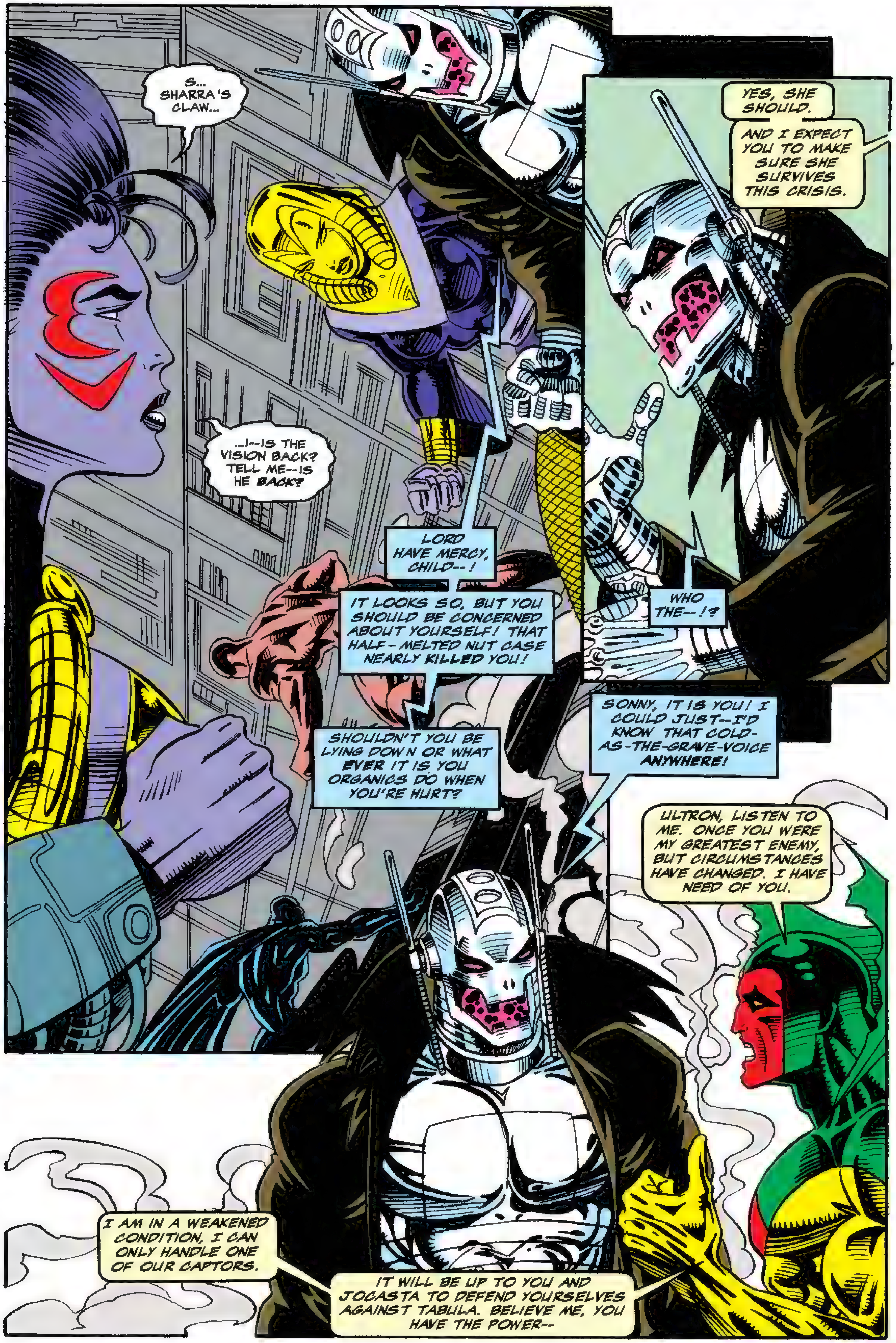
I KNOW YOUR TYPE! YOU THINK YOURSELF **SUPERIOR** BECAUSE YOU'RE A THING OF **FLESH AND BLOOD** WHILE WE ARE ONLY **PALE** SYNTHETICS!
WELL, LET'S SEE HOW SUPERIOR YOU ARE WHEN MY **INTANGIBLE** FIST GOES THROUGH YOUR **GRISTLE** TO RIP OUT YOUR LITTLE BROKEN HEART!
AIIEEEE!
HER SCREAM IS BLOODCURDLING-- PIERCING!
AND NONE WHO HEAR IT CAN **EVER** FORGET IT--FOR IT IS INDEED HER NAMESAKE.
IT IS A DEATHCRY.
ALMOST FORGOTTEN TO THE SIDE--INERT, LOST IN HIS OWN DEATHDREAM, THE VISION LIES.
AND NOW, TIME SLOWS DOWN--
--AS MULTIPLE IMAGES FLASH THROUGH HIS ARTIFICIAL MIND IN THE SPACE OF TIME BETWEEN ONE BREATH AND THE NEXT.

UP TO NOW, THE ANTI-VISION'S MASTERPIECE PROGRAM HAS BEEN GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.
THAT IS ABOUT TO CHANGE.
UH-UH, BUDDY--
--LISTEN TO YOUR GUT, *VISH.* DON'T TOUCH HER.
BECAUSE IF YOU DO, YOU'RE HISTORY.
SHE'S THE *EVE* FACTOR. A HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE IMPRINTED IN THE ANTI-VISION'S DUMP PROGRAM.
YOU TOUCH HER, AND IT SENDS SIGNALS TO YOUR BRAIN TO *ERASE* EVERYTHING IN ITS MEMORY THAT HAS *ANYTHING* TO DO WITH THE BEING CALLED *VISION*...
...AND LEAVES MEGABYTES OF SPACE FOR THE ANTI-VISION TO TAKE UP RESIDENCE.
AND *WHO* ARE YOU?
ME?
I'M *ONE* FACET OF THE VISION. I AM THAT PART OF HIS MIND THAT'S BASED ON THE LATE, GREAT *SIMON WILLIAMS.*

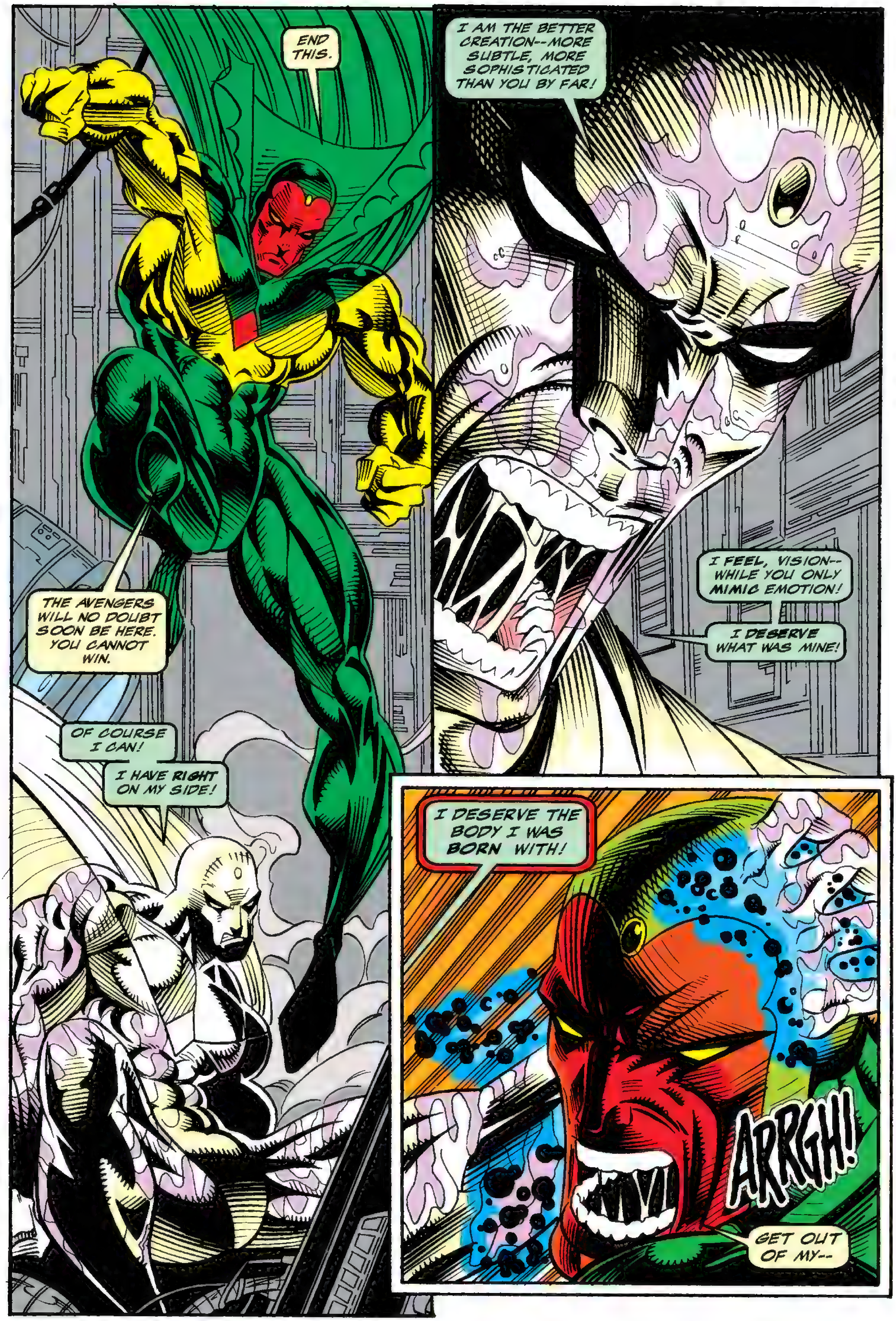

INTRIGUING.
I WAS NOT AWARE THAT ANY OF SIMON'S ENGRAMS REMAINED IN MY PROGRAMING. AND YOU ARE?
WHATEVER'S LEFT OF ***ALEXANDER LIPTON,*** VISION. WE'VE BOTH BEEN IN HERE, FIGHTING FOR YOU...FOR ***US.***
YOU'RE A ***LOT*** MORE COMPLEX AN ORGANISM THAN YOU GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT FOR.
YOU SAY SHE IS A TRAP?
SHE LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE WANDA, I--
DON'T LISTEN TO THEM, VISION.
THE BOYS AND I NEED YOU.
BILLY AND THOMAS? THIS--THIS CAN'T BE. THEY ARE DEAD...
...AREN'T THEY?
OF COURSE THEY ARE!
IT'S JUST MORE OF THE ANTI-VISION'S HANDIWORK. HE ***WANTS*** YOU TO GIVE IN TO THE FANTASY. THEY'RE ***NOT*** YOUR FAMILY. YOU ***CAN'T*** GIVE IN!
AND WHY NOT, LIPTON?
BY YOUR OWN ADMISSION, I AM NOTHING MORE THAN A REPOSITORY FOR THE ENGRAMS OF TWO DEAD MEN.
OR MORE, A PUPPET TO DANCE TO THE ANTI-VISION'S STRINGS.
NO! WE ***ARE*** YOU. SIMON AND I TOGETHER MAKE UP THE PERSON THAT YOU ARE! AND YOU ***ARE*** A PERSON, VISION--!
AS REAL AND AS UNIQUE AS ***ANY*** LIVING BEING.

SIMON AND I HAVE BEEN BATTLING THIS PROGRAM FOR WEEKS.
BARELY.
WE *ALMOST* WON BACK IN CHICAGO. THAT DETECTIVE PERSONA YOU DEVELOPED? THAT WAS SIMON'S THESPIAN TENDENCIES AND *MY* BACKGROUND AS A COP COMING TOGETHER--
--FORMING A *SHIELD* AGAINST THIS DREAM. YOU WEREN'T A PUPPET-- YOU WERE A *MAN* FIGHTING FOR *SURVIVAL!*
BUT IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP NOW AND FACE YOUR *DUTY.* HEAR THAT SCREAM?
IT'S DEATHCRY-- AND SHE NEEDS YOU. AND PUPPET OR NO-- PLASTIC MAN OR NOT--YOU HAVE A *RESPONSIBILITY* TO SAVE HER!
PLEASE, VISION!
WHAT ABOUT US? WE WERE *HAPPY* ONCE, REMEMBER? WE HAD DREAMS OF A FUTURE--FOR OUR BOYS!
PLEASE REMEMBER!
I--I DO.
AND THAT IS WHY YOU MUST FORGIVE ME...

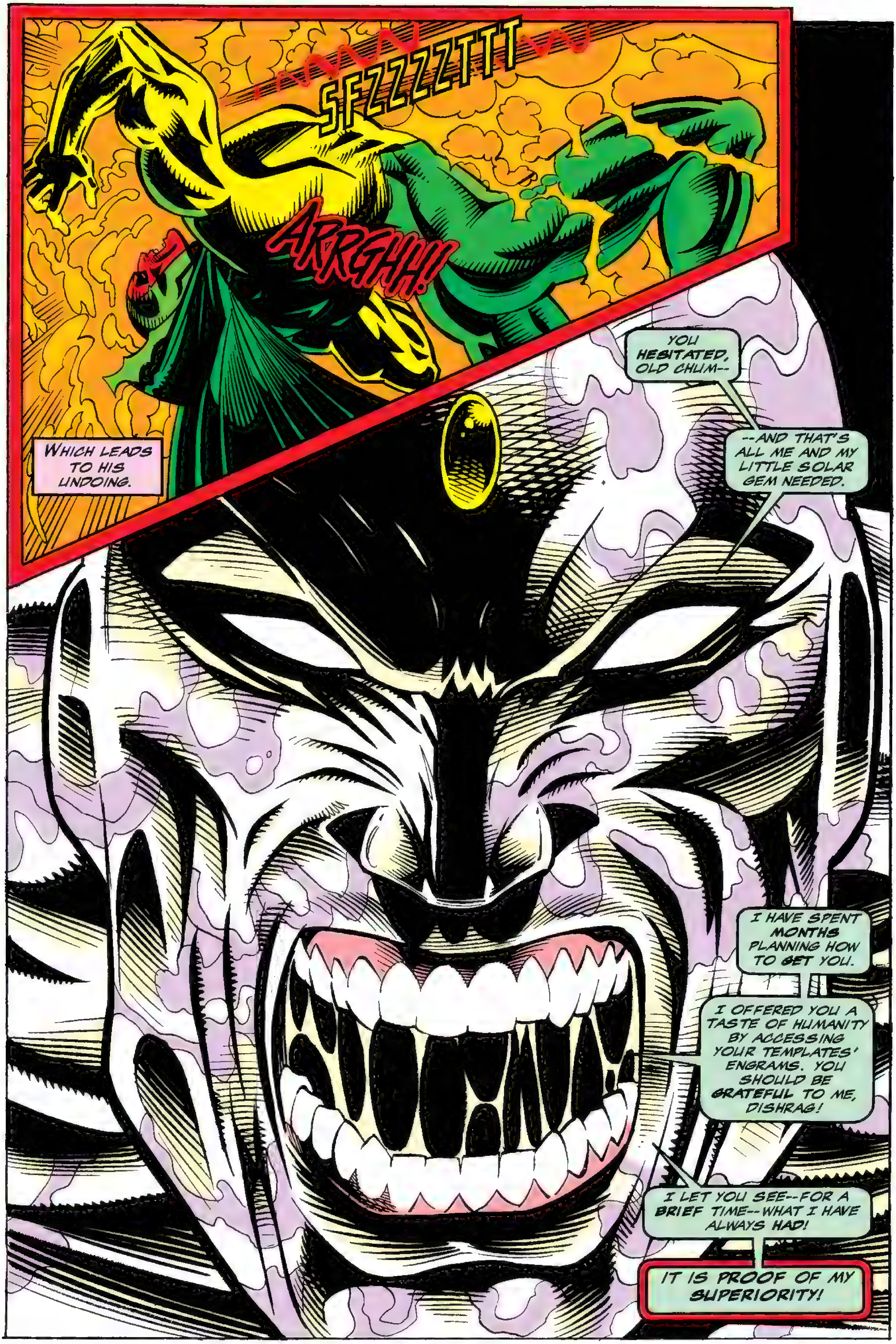

REALITY.
ONLY A SECOND OR TWO HAS PASSED.
JUST TIME ENOUGH FOR THE HEART TO BEAT ONCE MORE.
BUT TIME ENOUGH FOR A SYNTHETIC MAN TO MAKE A DECISION...
...AND EVERYTHING CHANGES.
YOU WILL STOP THIS.
WHO--!?
KA-POW!
UHHH!
YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE HURTING PEOPLE.
HAVE I MADE MYSELF CLEAR, GATHERER?
IT CAN'T BE-- IT IS YOU!?
MY ERASURE PROGRAM--YOU COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED IT. I BUILT IT TOO WELL!

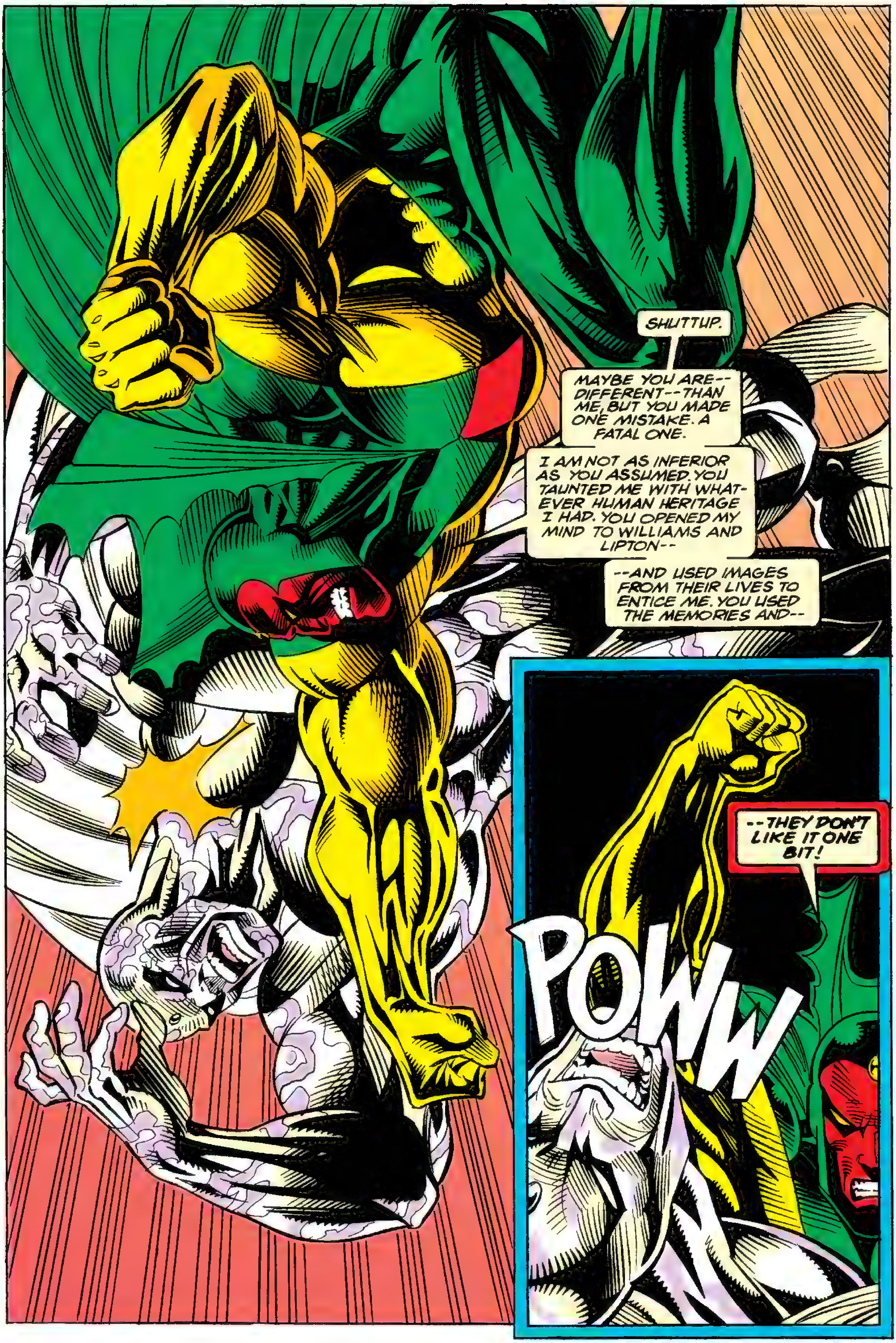

S... SHARRA'S CLAW...
...I--IS THE VISION BACK? TELL ME--IS HE *BACK?*
YES, SHE SHOULD.
AND I EXPECT YOU TO MAKE SURE SHE SURVIVES THIS CRISIS.
LORD HAVE MERCY, CHILD--!
IT LOOKS SO, BUT YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT YOURSELF! THAT HALF-MELTED NUT CASE NEARLY **KILLED** YOU!
WHO THE--!?
SHOULDN'T YOU BE LYING DOWN OR WHAT **EVER** IT IS YOU ORGANICS DO WHEN YOU'RE HURT?
SONNY, IT IS YOU! I COULD JUST--I'D KNOW THAT COLD-AS-THE-GRAVE-VOICE **ANYWHERE!**
ULTRON, LISTEN TO ME. ONCE YOU WERE MY GREATEST ENEMY, BUT CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED. I HAVE NEED OF YOU.
I AM IN A WEAKENED CONDITION, I CAN ONLY HANDLE ONE OF OUR CAPTORS.
IT WILL BE UP TO YOU AND JOCASTA TO DEFEND YOURSELVES AGAINST TABULA. BELIEVE ME, YOU HAVE THE POWER--

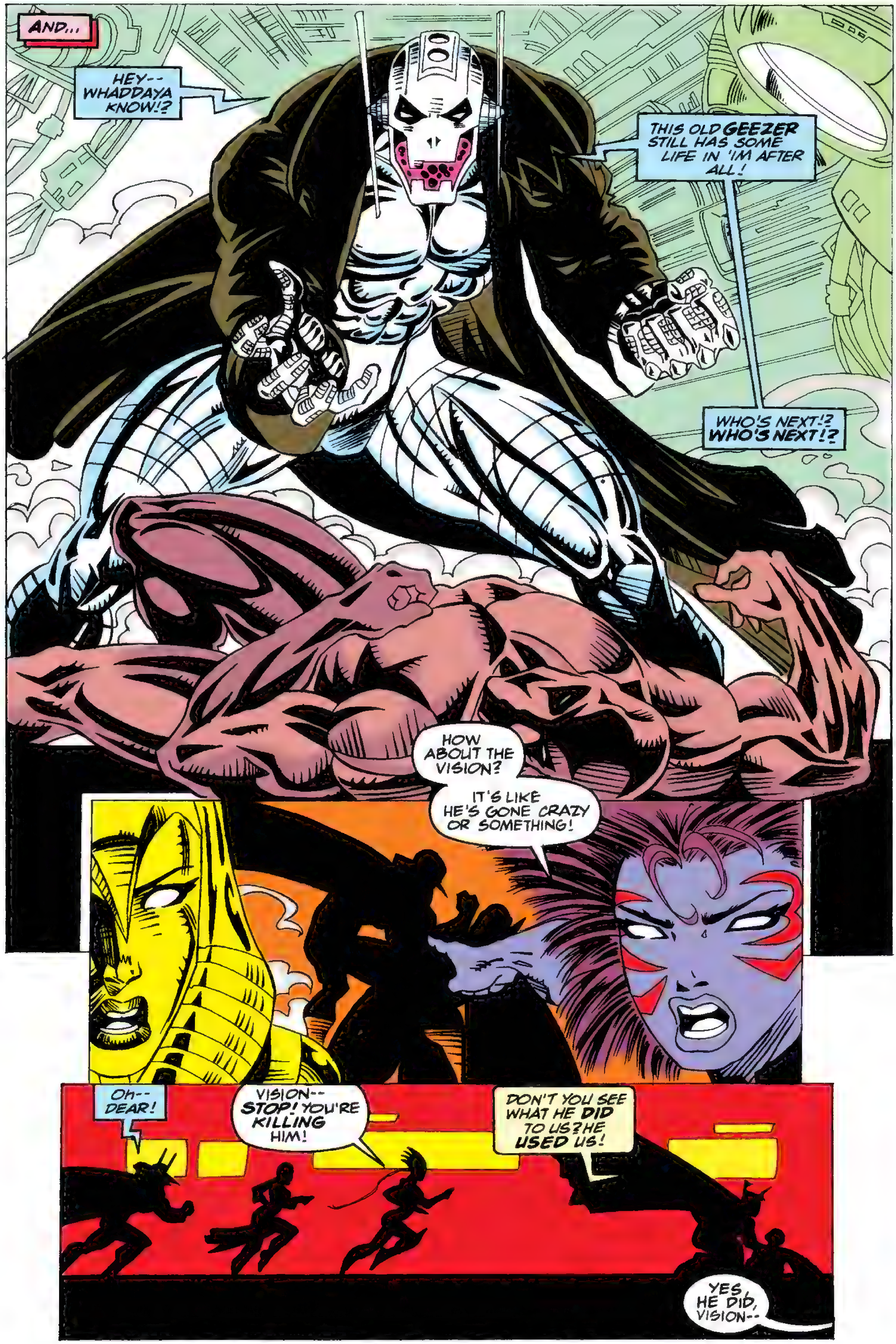
--YOU JUST HAVE TO REMEMBER HOW TO USE IT.
I--I DON'T KNOW...!
YES, YOU DO. DO IT.
SO HE LEAVES YOU BEHIND--LIKE THE COWARD HE IS.
HE IS A PATHETIC THING.
I WOULDN'T GO INSULTING MY BOY, TABBY--!
IT COULD GET YOU HURT!
SMASK!
DID I--
--DO--
--THAT!?
WELL, THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM!

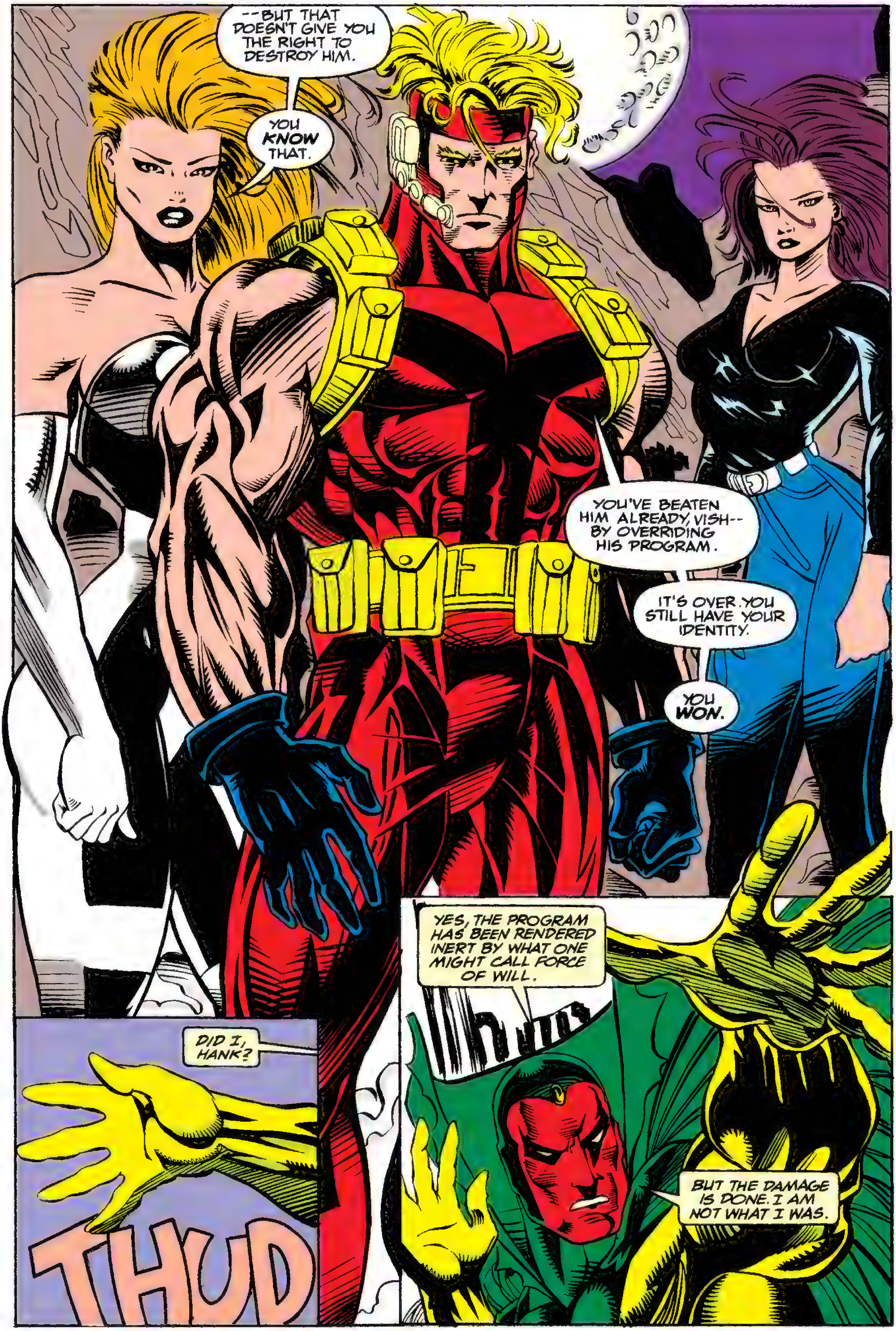

END THIS.
THE AVENGERS WILL NO DOUBT SOON BE HERE. YOU CANNOT WIN.
OF COURSE I CAN!
I HAVE RIGHT ON MY SIDE!
I AM THE BETTER CREATION--MORE SUBTLE, MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN YOU BY FAR!
I FEEL, VISION--WHILE YOU ONLY MIMIC EMOTION!
I DESERVE WHAT WAS MINE!
I DESERVE THE BODY I WAS BORN WITH!
ARRGH!
GET OUT OF MY--

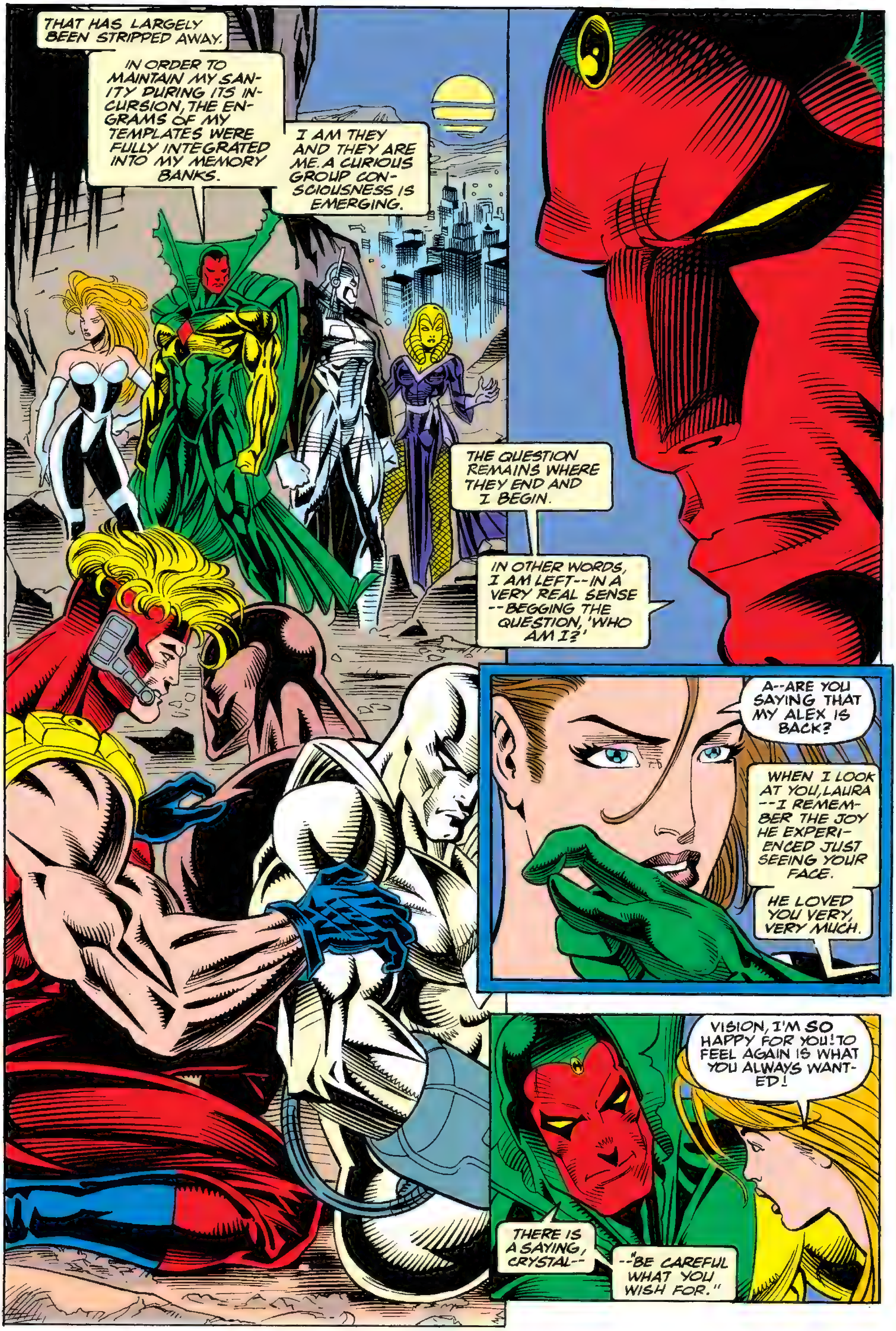
--HEAD!
VERY GOOD, CALCULATOR MAN!
SHOULD I BE SCARED? YOU ACTUALLY SOUNDED REALLY ANGRY THERE.
AND SUDDENLY WITH A START--
--THAT LEAPS FROM ONE ARTIFICIAL SYNAPSE TO THE NEXT--
--THE VISION KNOWS THAT HE IS FEELING SOMETHING.
HATE.
AND HARD ON THAT DISCOVERY COMES ANOTHER EMOTION.
SHOCK.

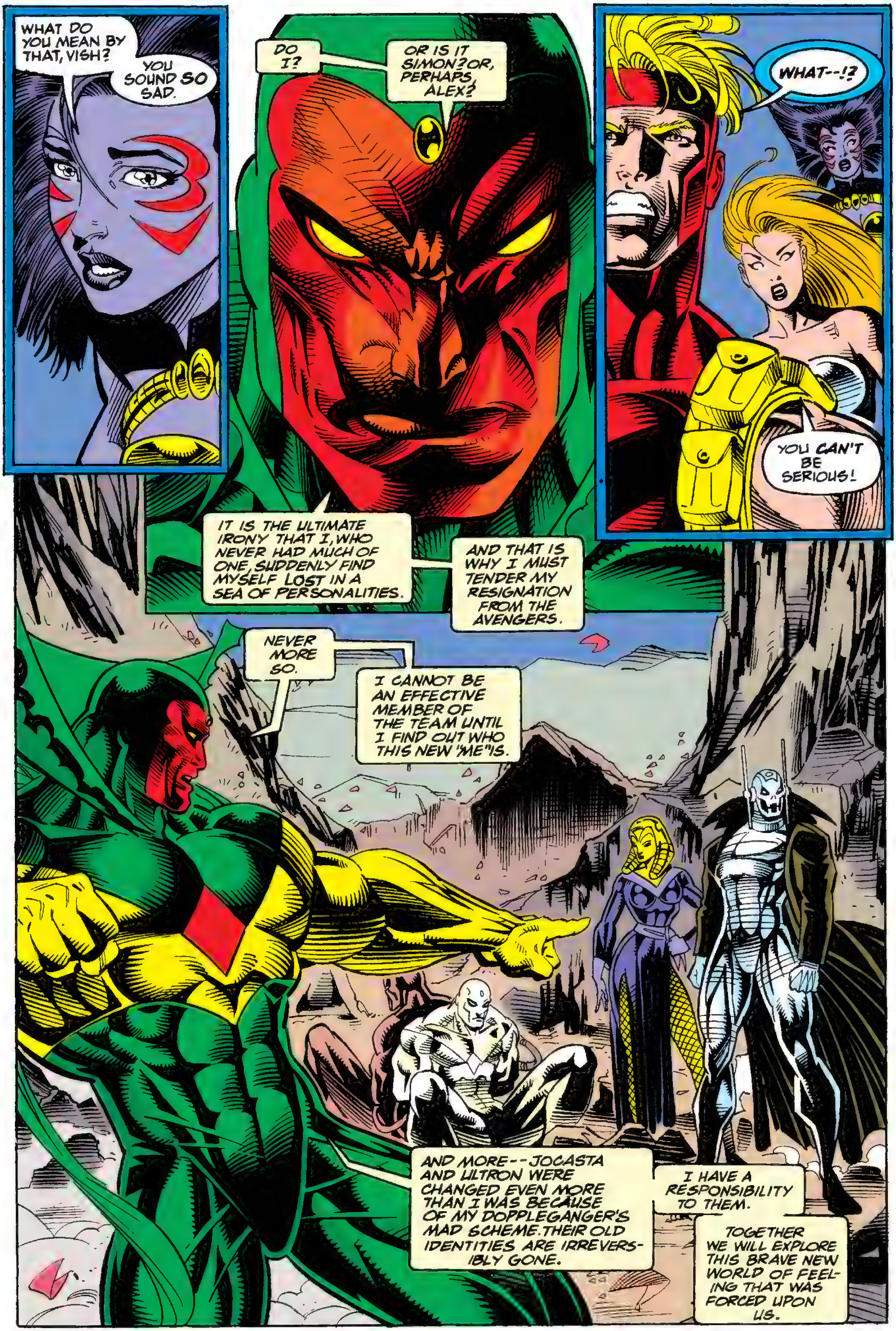

SFZZZZTTT
ARRGHH!
WHICH LEADS TO HIS UNDOING.
YOU HESITATED, OLD CHUM--
--AND THAT'S ALL ME AND MY LITTLE SOLAR GEM NEEDED.
I HAVE SPENT MONTHS PLANNING HOW TO GET YOU.
I OFFERED YOU A TASTE OF HUMANITY BY ACCESSING YOUR TEMPLATES' ENGRAMS. YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO ME, DISHRAG!
I LET YOU SEE--FOR A BRIEF TIME--WHAT I HAVE ALWAYS HAD!
IT IS PROOF OF MY SUPERIORITY!

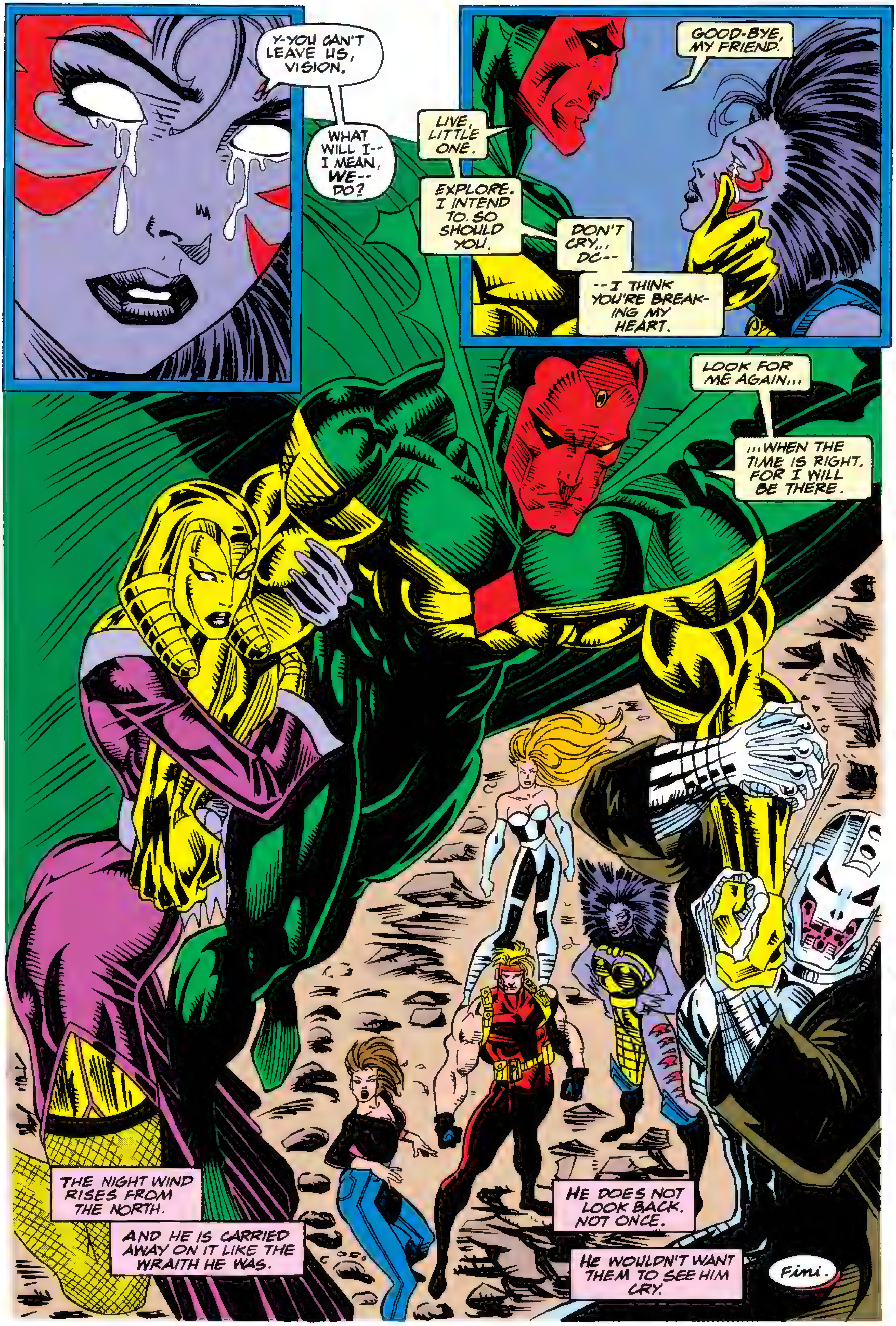

SHUTTUP.
MAYBE YOU ARE--DIFFERENT--THAN ME, BUT YOU MADE ONE MISTAKE. A FATAL ONE.
I AM NOT AS INFERIOR AS YOU ASSUMED. YOU TAUNTED ME WITH WHATEVER HUMAN HERITAGE I HAD. YOU OPENED MY MIND TO WILLIAMS AND LIPTON--
--AND USED IMAGES FROM THEIR LIVES TO ENTICE ME. YOU USED THE MEMORIES AND--
--THEY DON'T LIKE IT ONE BIT!
POWW


AND...
HEY-- WHADDAYA KNOW!?
THIS OLD GEEZER STILL HAS SOME LIFE IN 'IM AFTER ALL!
WHO'S NEXT!? WHO'S NEXT!?
HOW ABOUT THE VISION?
IT'S LIKE HE'S GONE CRAZY OR SOMETHING!
Oh-- DEAR!
VISION-- STOP! YOU'RE KILLING HIM!
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT HE DID TO US? HE USED US!
YES HE DID, VISION--


--BUT THAT DOESN'T GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO DESTROY HIM.
YOU *KNOW* THAT.
YOU'VE BEATEN HIM ALREADY, VISH-- BY OVERRIDING HIS PROGRAM.
IT'S OVER. YOU STILL HAVE YOUR IDENTITY.
YOU *WON*.
DID I, HANK?
THUD
YES, THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN RENDERED INERT BY WHAT ONE MIGHT CALL FORCE OF WILL.
BUT THE DAMAGE IS DONE. I AM NOT WHAT I WAS.


THAT HAS LARGELY BEEN STRIPPED AWAY.
IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN MY SANITY DURING ITS INCURSION, THE ENGRAMS OF MY TEMPLATES WERE FULLY INTEGRATED INTO MY MEMORY BANKS.
I AM THEY AND THEY ARE ME. A CURIOUS GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS IS EMERGING.
THE QUESTION REMAINS WHERE THEY END AND I BEGIN.
IN OTHER WORDS, I AM LEFT--IN A VERY REAL SENSE --BEGGING THE QUESTION, 'WHO AM I?'
A--ARE YOU SAYING THAT MY ALEX IS BACK?
WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, LAURA --I REMEMBER THE JOY HE EXPERIENCED JUST SEEING YOUR FACE.
HE LOVED YOU VERY, VERY MUCH.
VISION, I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU! TO FEEL AGAIN IS WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED!
THERE IS A SAYING, CRYSTAL--
--"BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR."


WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT, VISH?
YOU SOUND SO SAD.
DO I?
OR IS IT SIMON? OR, PERHAPS, ALEX?
WHAT--!?
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
IT IS THE ULTIMATE IRONY THAT I, WHO NEVER HAD MUCH OF ONE, SUDDENLY FIND MYSELF LOST IN A SEA OF PERSONALITIES.
AND THAT IS WHY I MUST TENDER MY RESIGNATION FROM THE AVENGERS.
NEVER MORE SO.
I CANNOT BE AN EFFECTIVE MEMBER OF THE TEAM UNTIL I FIND OUT WHO THIS NEW "ME" IS.
AND MORE--JOCASTA AND ULTRON WERE CHANGED EVEN MORE THAN I WAS BECAUSE OF MY DOPPLEGANGER'S MAD SCHEME. THEIR OLD IDENTITIES ARE IRREVERSIBLY GONE.
I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THEM.
TOGETHER WE WILL EXPLORE THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD OF FEELING THAT WAS FORCED UPON US.


Y-YOU CAN'T LEAVE US, VISION.
WHAT WILL I-- I MEAN, WE-- DO?
GOOD-BYE, MY FRIEND.
LIVE, LITTLE ONE.
EXPLORE. I INTEND TO. SO SHOULD YOU.
DON'T CRY... DC--
--I THINK YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART.
LOOK FOR ME AGAIN...
...WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT. FOR I WILL BE THERE.
THE NIGHT WIND RISES FROM THE NORTH.
AND HE IS CARRIED AWAY ON IT LIKE THE WRAITH HE WAS.
HE DOES NOT LOOK BACK. NOT ONCE.
HE WOULDN'T WANT THEM TO SEE HIM CRY.
Fini.

MARVEL COMICS
384
MAR '94
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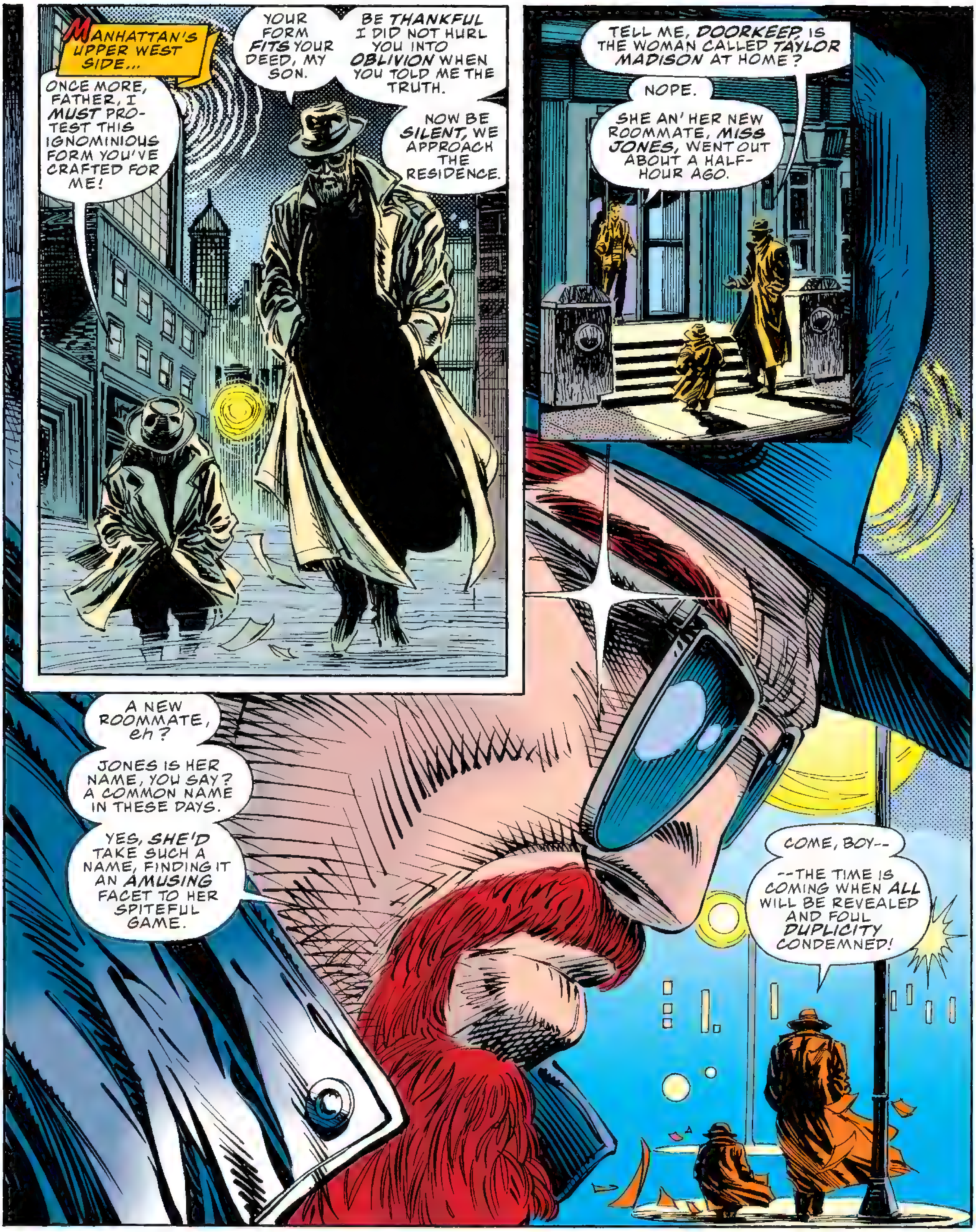
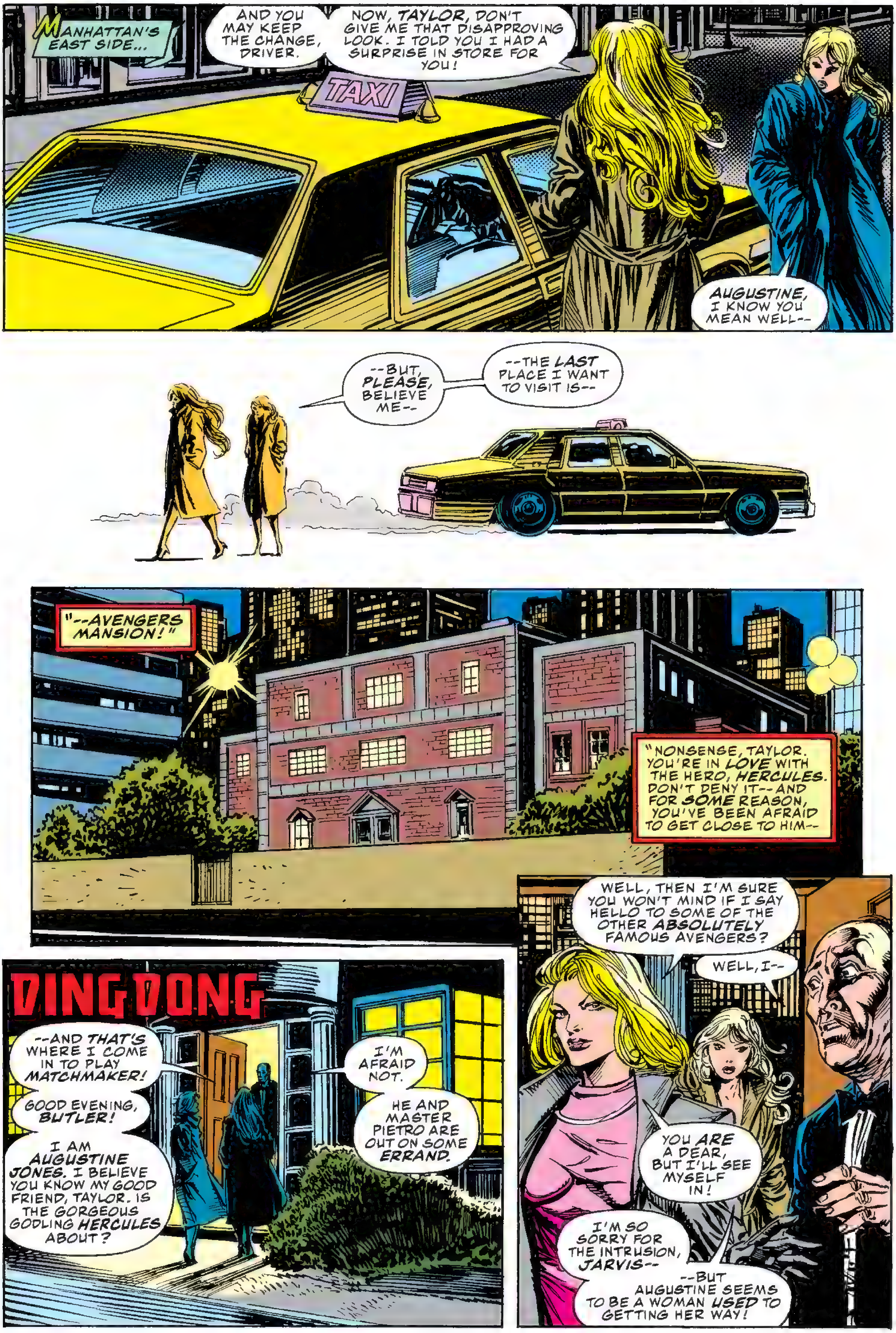
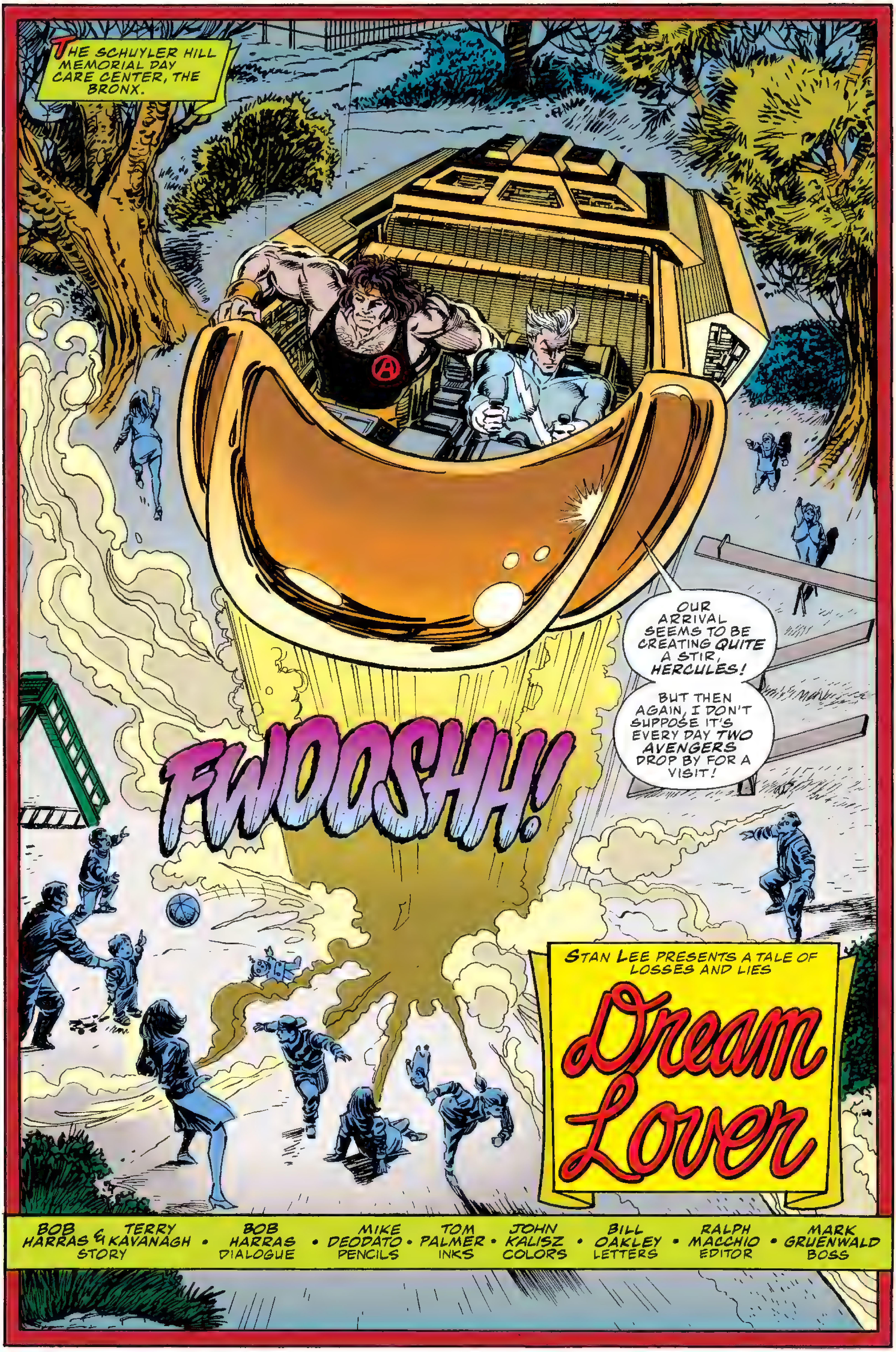
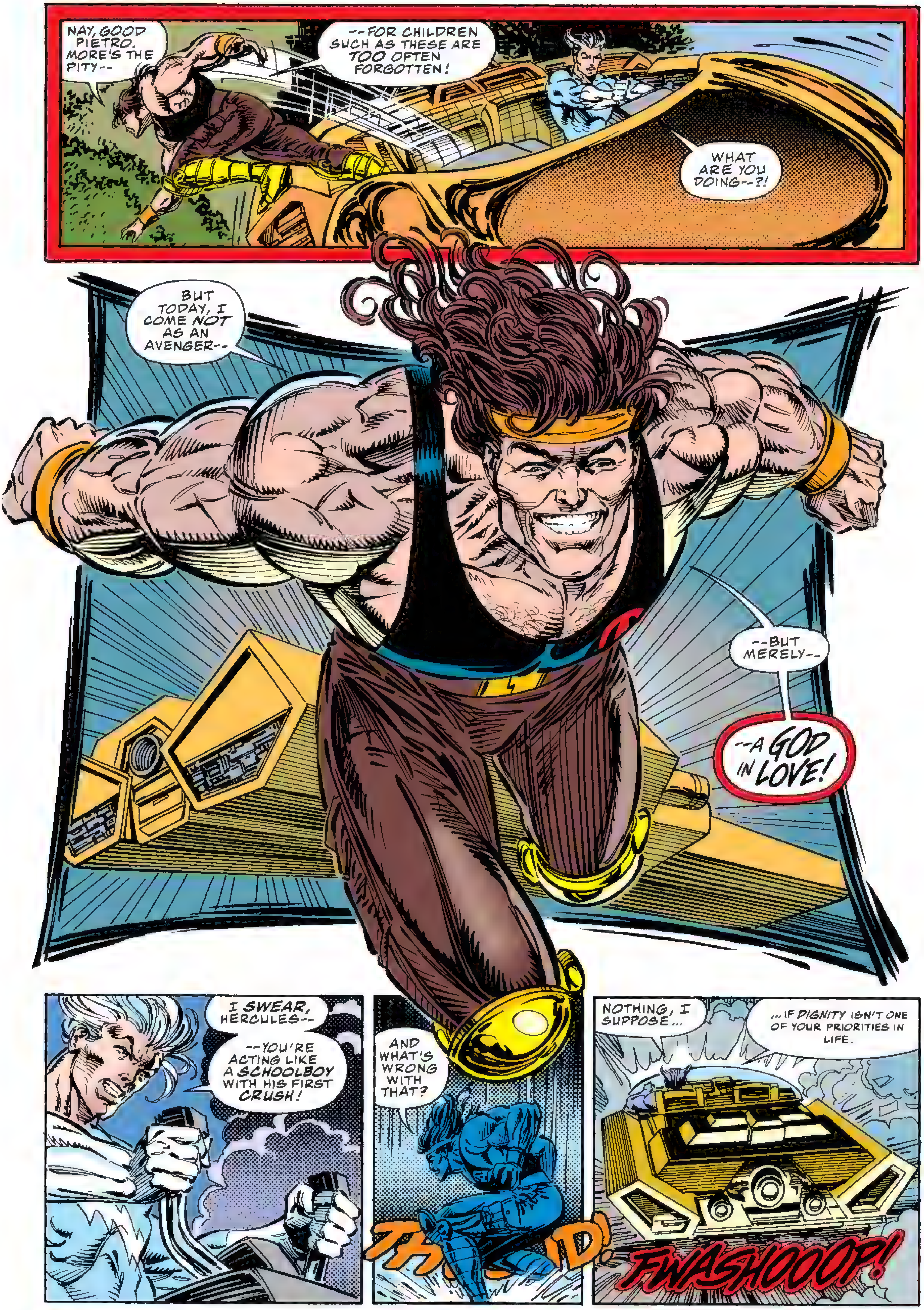
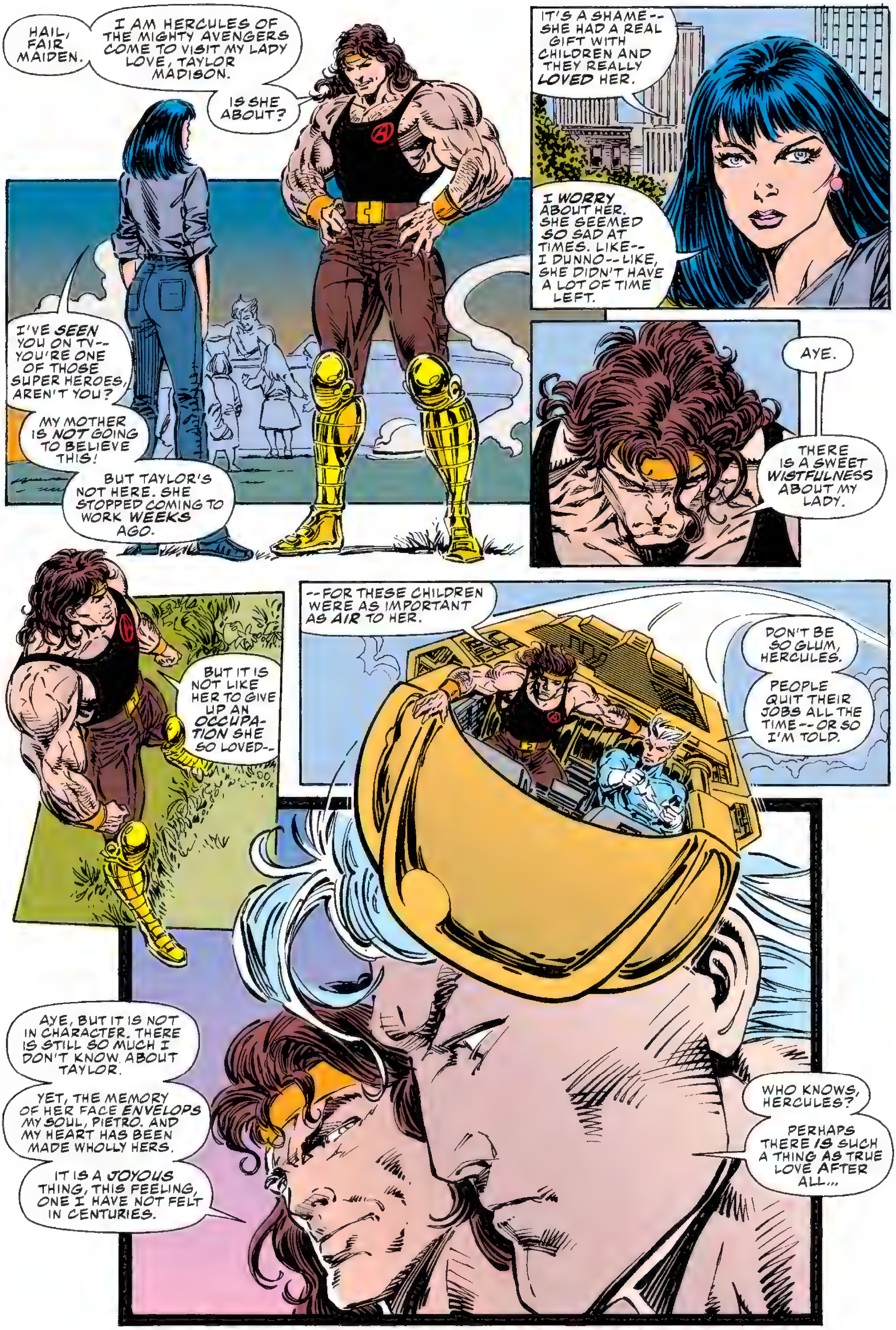
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
GAME OF THE GODS
TOM PALMER '94

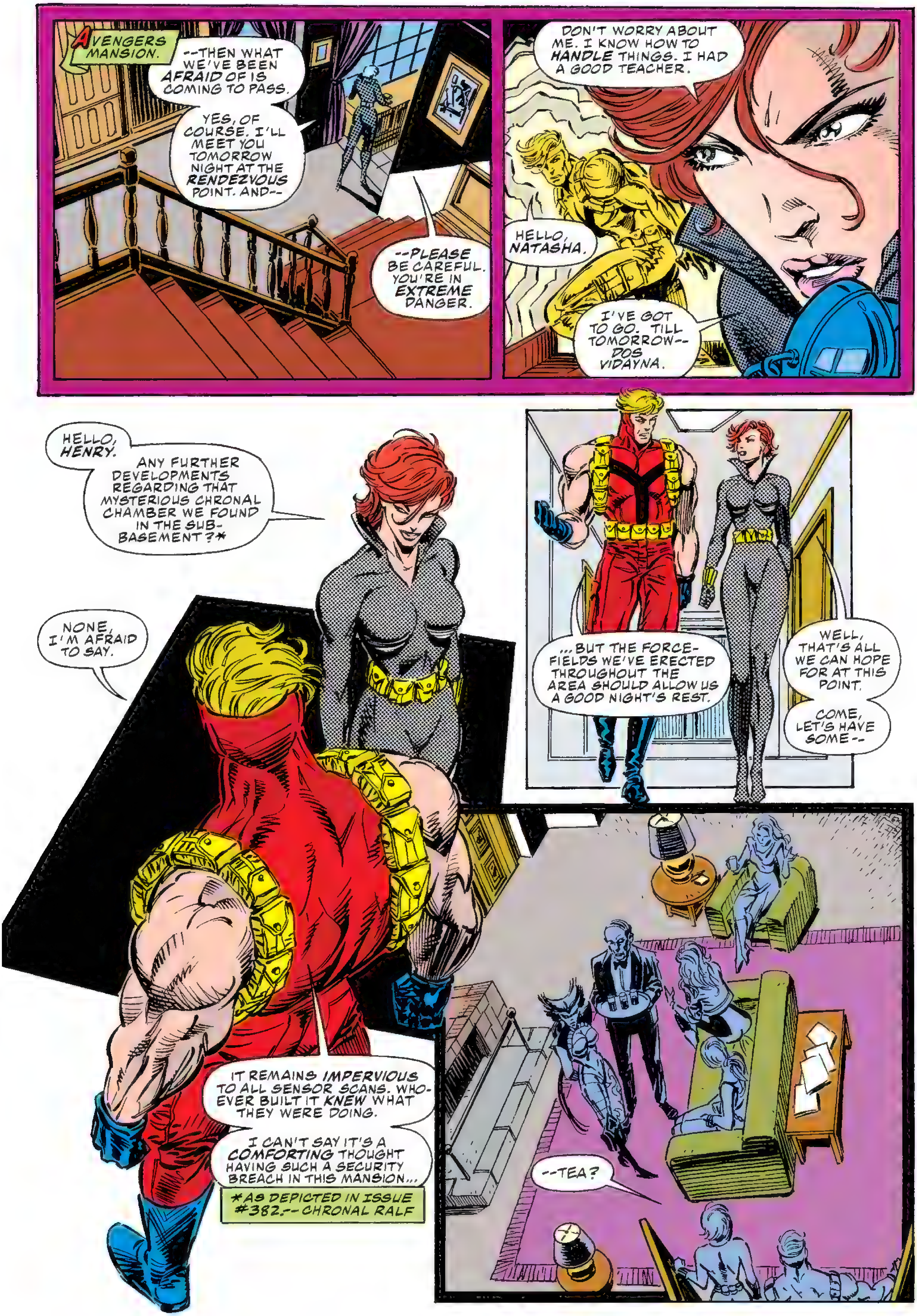

MANHATTAN'S UPPER WEST SIDE...
ONCE MORE, FATHER, I MUST PROTEST THIS IGNOMINIOUS FORM YOU'VE CRAFTED FOR ME!
YOUR FORM FITS YOUR DEED, MY SON.
BE THANKFUL I DID NOT HURL YOU INTO OBLIVION WHEN YOU TOLD ME THE TRUTH.
NOW BE SILENT, WE APPROACH THE RESIDENCE.
TELL ME, DOORKEEP, IS THE WOMAN CALLED TAYLOR MADISON AT HOME?
NOPE.
SHE AN' HER NEW ROOMMATE, MISS JONES, WENT OUT ABOUT A HALF-HOUR AGO.
A NEW ROOMMATE, eh?
JONES IS HER NAME, YOU SAY? A COMMON NAME IN THESE DAYS.
YES, SHE'D TAKE SUCH A NAME, FINDING IT AN AMUSING FACET TO HER SPITEFUL GAME.
COME, BOY--
--THE TIME IS COMING WHEN ALL WILL BE REVEALED AND FOUL DUPLICITY CONDEMNED!

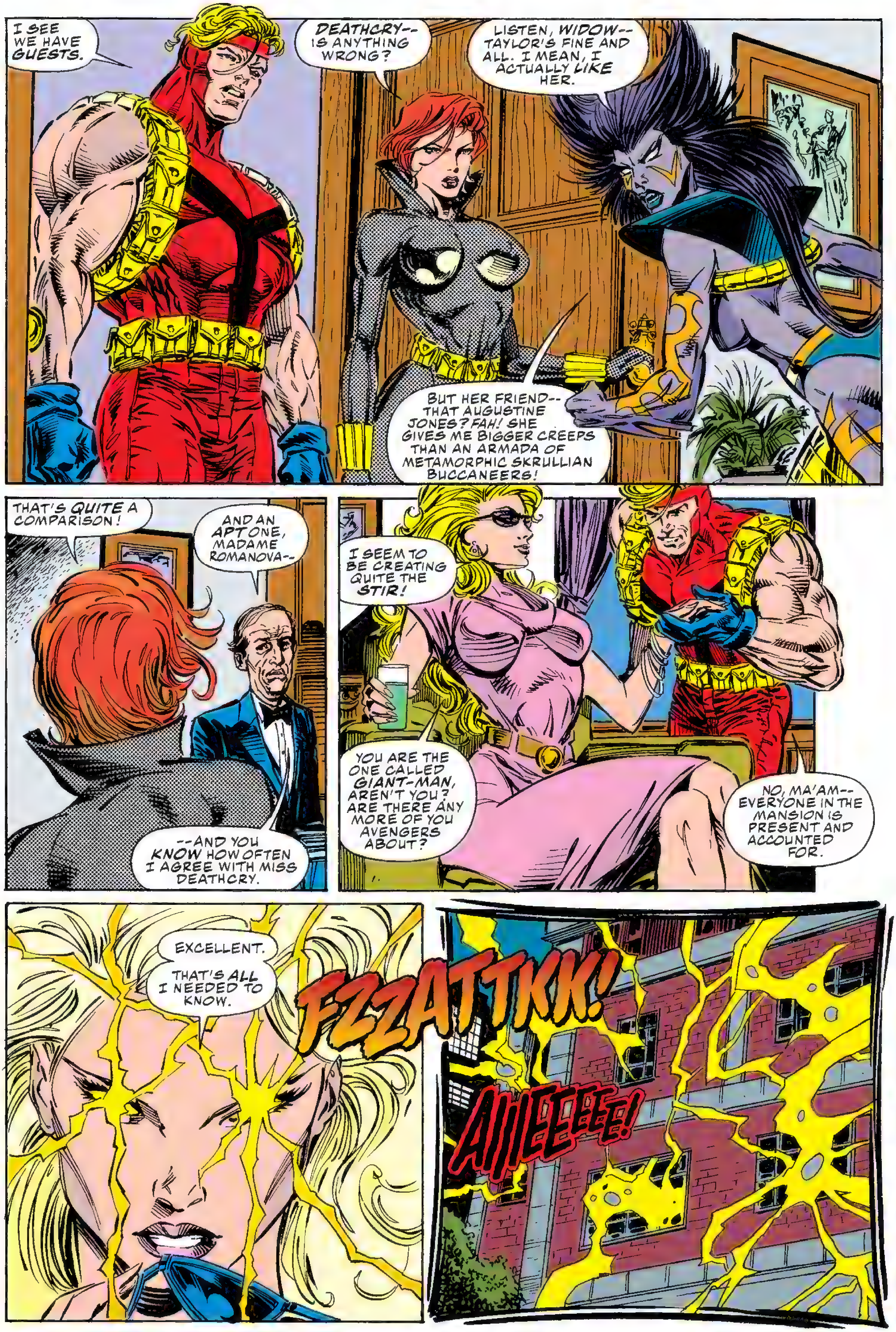

MANHATTAN'S EAST SIDE...
AND YOU MAY KEEP THE CHANGE, DRIVER.
NOW, TAYLOR, DON'T GIVE ME THAT DISAPPROVING LOOK. I TOLD YOU I HAD A SURPRISE IN STORE FOR YOU!
TAXI
AUGUSTINE, I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL--
--BUT, PLEASE, BELIEVE ME--
--THE LAST PLACE I WANT TO VISIT IS--
"--AVENGERS MANSION!"
"NONSENSE, TAYLOR. YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH THE HERO, HERCULES. DON'T DENY IT--AND FOR SOME REASON, YOU'VE BEEN AFRAID TO GET CLOSE TO HIM--
DING DONG
--AND THAT'S WHERE I COME IN TO PLAY MATCHMAKER!
GOOD EVENING, BUTLER!
I AM AUGUSTINE JONES. I BELIEVE YOU KNOW MY GOOD FRIEND, TAYLOR. IS THE GORGEOUS GODLING HERCULES ABOUT?
I'M AFRAID NOT.
HE AND MASTER PIETRO ARE OUT ON SOME ERRAND.
WELL, THEN I'M SURE YOU WON'T MIND IF I SAY HELLO TO SOME OF THE OTHER ABSOLUTELY FAMOUS AVENGERS?
WELL, I--
YOU ARE A DEAR, BUT I'LL SEE MYSELF IN!
I'M SO SORRY FOR THE INTRUSION, JARVIS--
--BUT AUGUSTINE SEEMS TO BE A WOMAN USED TO GETTING HER WAY!


THE SCHUYLER HILL MEMORIAL DAY CARE CENTER, THE BRONX.
OUR ARRIVAL SEEMS TO BE CREATING QUITE A STIR, HERCULES!
BUT THEN AGAIN, I DON'T SUPPOSE IT'S EVERY DAY TWO AVENGERS DROP BY FOR A VISIT!
FWOOSHH!
STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF LOSSES AND LIES
Dream Lover
BOB HARRAS & TERRY KAVANAGH STORY • BOB HARRAS DIALOGUE • MIKE DEODATO PENCILS • TOM PALMER INKS • JOHN KALISZ COLORS • BILL OAKLEY LETTERS • RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR • MARK GRUENWALD BOSS

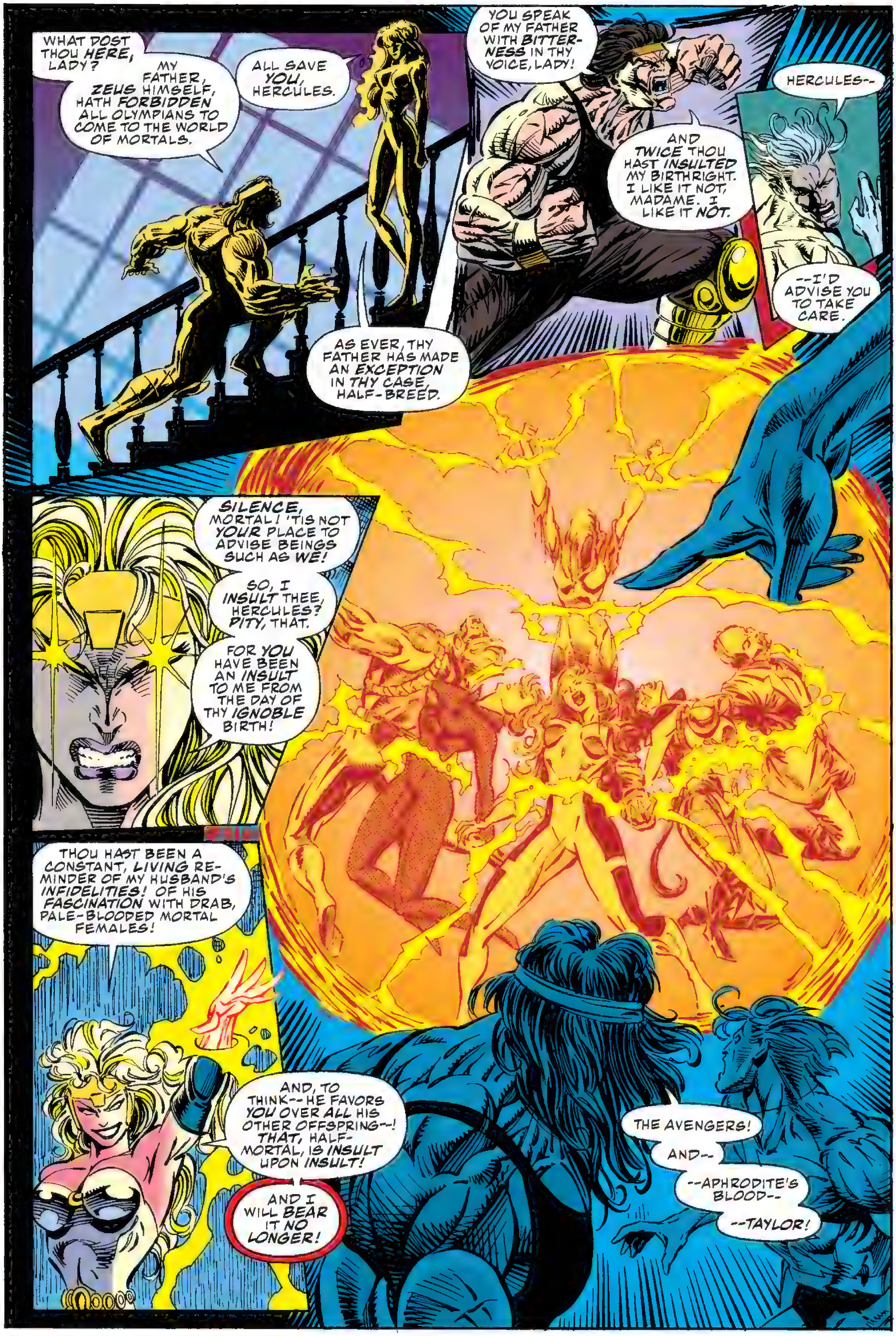

NAY, GOOD PIETRO. MORE'S THE PITY--
--FOR CHILDREN SUCH AS THESE ARE *TOO* OFTEN FORGOTTEN!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?!
BUT TODAY, I COME *NOT* AS AN AVENGER--
--BUT MERELY--
--A GOD IN LOVE!
I SWEAR, HERCULES--
--YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A *SCHOOLBOY* WITH HIS FIRST *CRUSH!*
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
TH D!
NOTHING, I SUPPOSE...
...IF *DIGNITY* ISN'T ONE OF YOUR PRIORITIES IN LIFE.
FWASHOOOP!

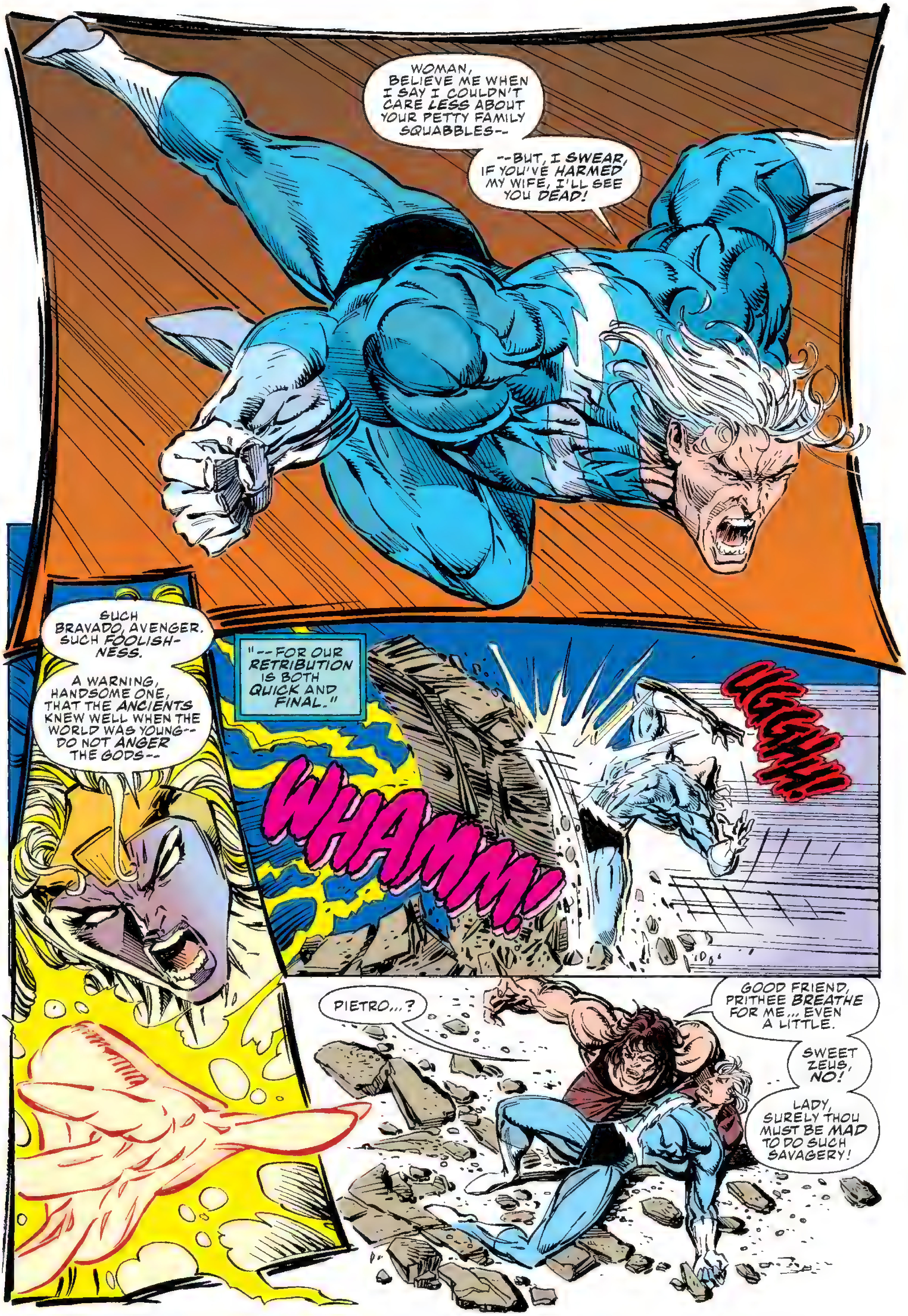

HAIL, FAIR MAIDEN.
I AM HERCULES OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS COME TO VISIT MY LADY LOVE, TAYLOR MADISON.
IS SHE ABOUT?
I'VE *SEEN* YOU ON TV-- YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE SUPER HEROES, AREN'T YOU?
MY MOTHER IS *NOT* GOING TO BELIEVE THIS!
BUT TAYLOR'S NOT HERE. SHE STOPPED COMING TO WORK *WEEKS* AGO.
IT'S A SHAME-- SHE HAD A REAL GIFT WITH CHILDREN AND THEY REALLY *LOVED* HER.
I *WORRY* ABOUT HER. SHE SEEMED *SO SAD* AT TIMES. LIKE-- I DUNNO--LIKE, SHE DIDN'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME LEFT.
AYE.
THERE IS A SWEET *WISTFULNESS* ABOUT MY LADY.
BUT IT IS NOT LIKE HER TO GIVE UP AN *OCCUPATION* SHE SO LOVED--
--FOR THESE CHILDREN WERE AS IMPORTANT AS *AIR* TO HER.
DON'T BE SO GLUM, HERCULES.
PEOPLE QUIT THEIR JOBS ALL THE TIME--OR SO I'M TOLD.
AYE, BUT IT IS NOT IN CHARACTER. THERE IS STILL SO MUCH I DON'T KNOW ABOUT TAYLOR.
YET, THE MEMORY OF HER FACE *ENVELOPS* MY SOUL, PIETRO. AND MY HEART HAS BEEN MADE WHOLLY HERS.
IT IS A *JOYOUS* THING, THIS FEELING, ONE I HAVE NOT FELT IN CENTURIES.
WHO KNOWS, HERCULES?
PERHAPS THERE *IS* SUCH A THING AS TRUE LOVE AFTER ALL...

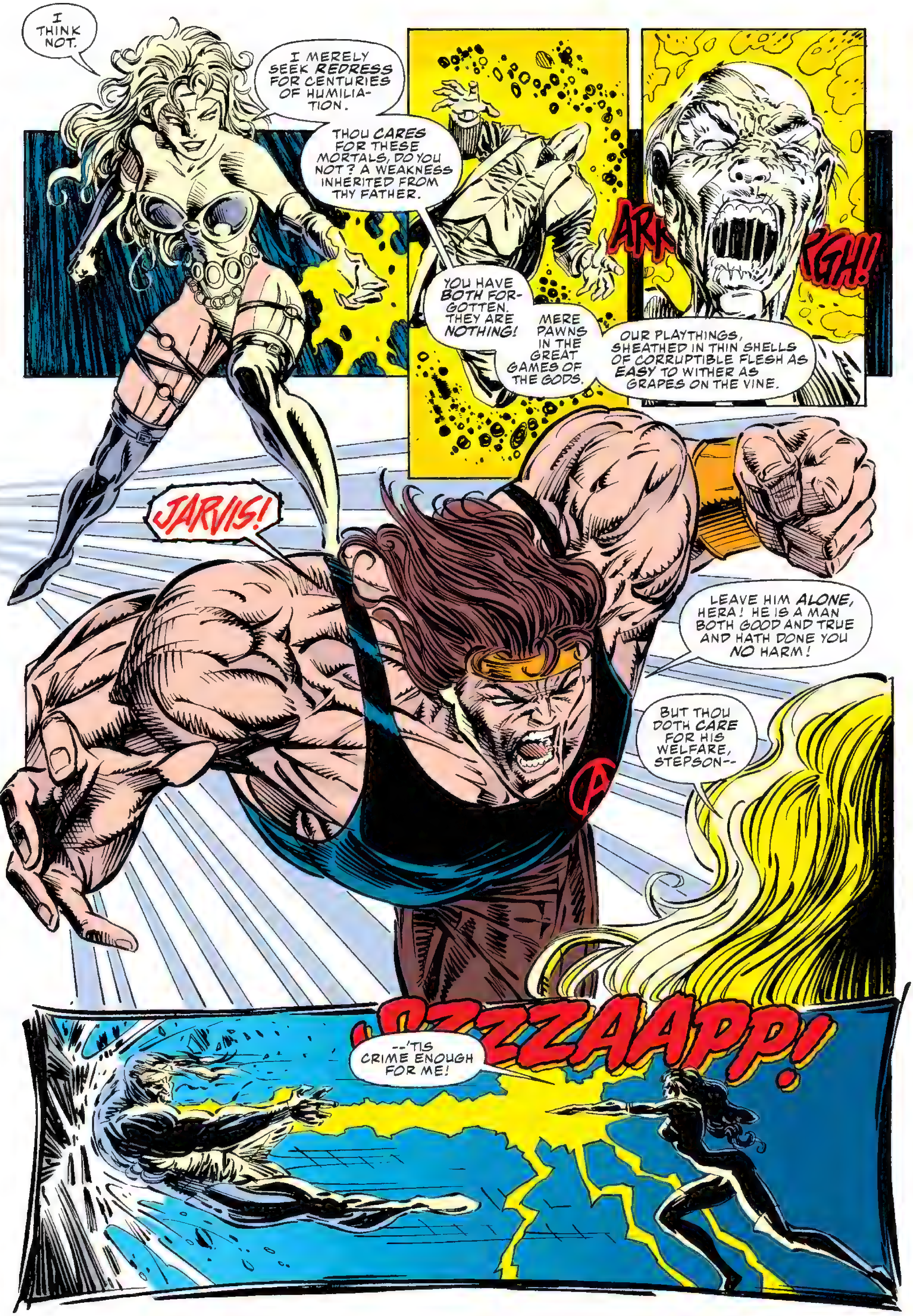

AVENGERS MANSION.
--THEN WHAT WE'VE BEEN AFRAID OF IS COMING TO PASS.
YES, OF COURSE. I'LL MEET YOU TOMORROW NIGHT AT THE RENDEZVOUS POINT. AND--
--PLEASE BE CAREFUL. YOU'RE IN EXTREME DANGER.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THINGS. I HAD A GOOD TEACHER.
HELLO, NATASHA.
I'VE GOT TO GO. TILL TOMORROW-- DOS VIDAYNA.
HELLO, HENRY.
ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING THAT MYSTERIOUS CHRONAL CHAMBER WE FOUND IN THE SUB-BASEMENT?*
NONE, I'M AFRAID TO SAY.
IT REMAINS IMPERVIOUS TO ALL SENSOR SCANS. WHOEVER BUILT IT KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOING.
I CAN'T SAY IT'S A COMFORTING THOUGHT HAVING SUCH A SECURITY BREACH IN THIS MANSION...
*AS DEPICTED IN ISSUE #382.--CHRONAL RALF
...BUT THE FORCE-FIELDS WE'VE ERECTED THROUGHOUT THE AREA SHOULD ALLOW US A GOOD NIGHT'S REST.
WELL, THAT'S ALL WE CAN HOPE FOR AT THIS POINT.
COME, LET'S HAVE SOME--
--TEA?

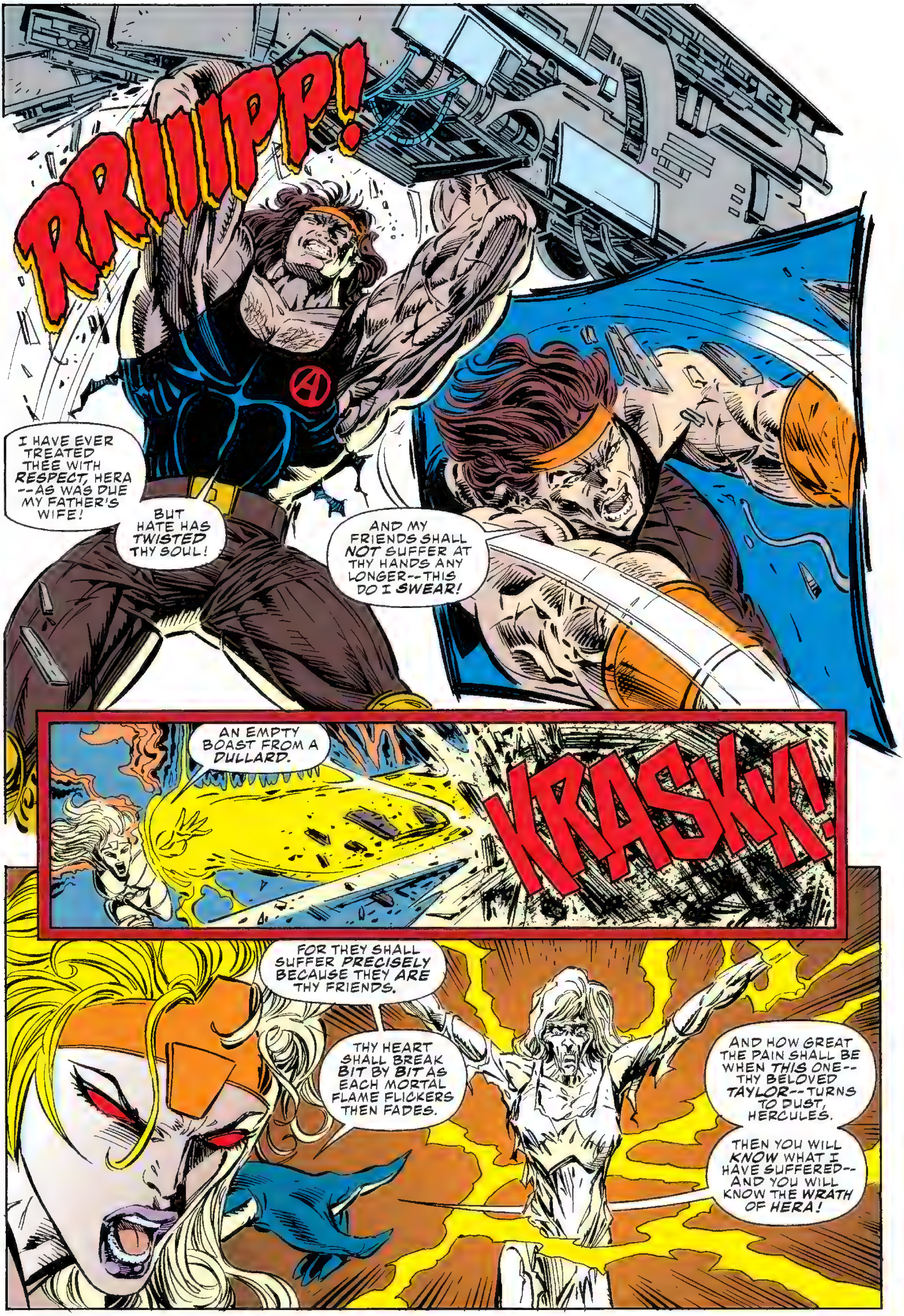

I SEE WE HAVE *GUESTS.*
DEATHCRY--IS ANYTHING WRONG?
LISTEN, *WIDOW*--TAYLOR'S FINE AND ALL. I MEAN, I ACTUALLY *LIKE* HER.
BUT HER FRIEND--THAT AUGUSTINE JONES? *FAH!* SHE GIVES ME BIGGER CREEPS THAN AN ARMADA OF METAMORPHIC SKRULLIAN BUCCANEERS!
THAT'S *QUITE* A COMPARISON!
AND AN *APT* ONE, MADAME ROMANOVA--
--AND YOU *KNOW* HOW OFTEN I AGREE WITH MISS DEATHCRY.
I SEEM TO BE CREATING QUITE THE *STIR!*
YOU ARE THE ONE CALLED *GIANT-MAN,* AREN'T YOU? ARE THERE ANY MORE OF YOU AVENGERS ABOUT?
NO, MA'AM--EVERYONE IN THE MANSION IS PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR.
EXCELLENT.
THAT'S *ALL* I NEEDED TO KNOW.
FZZATTKK!
AIIIEEEEE!

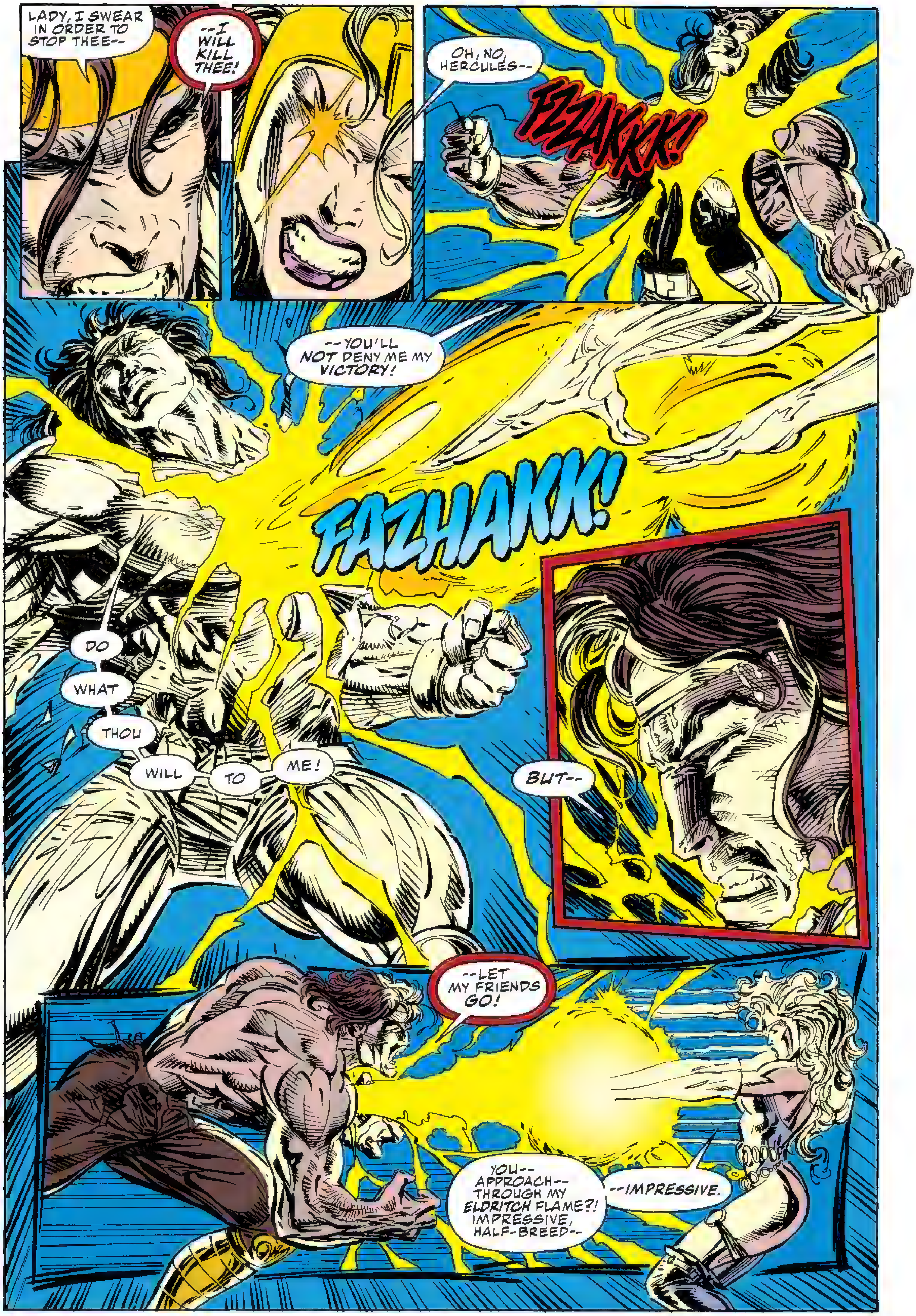
LATER...
THE MANSION IS MOST UNCOMMONLY DARK, QUICKSILVER.
AND THE SILENCE MOST... UNNERVING.
YOU HAVE A KNACK FOR STATING THE OBVIOUS, HERCULES!
STAY HERE WHILE I RECONNOITER FOR ANY SIGNS OF TROUBLE.
NAY!
MY WIFE AND CHILD MAY BE IN DANGER, OLYMPIAN! I--!
I UNDERSTAND THY CONCERNS. INDEED, I SHARE THEM...
...BUT I ASK THEE TO HOLD FOR A MOMENT, MY FRIEND, FOR I DOTH FEEL A PRESENCE IN THESE SHADOWS...
...ONE I FIND DISTURBINGLY FAMILIAR!
DO I DISTURB THEE, HALF-BREED?
WHY? FOR I AM YOUR BELOVED STEP-MOTHER!
HERA?!

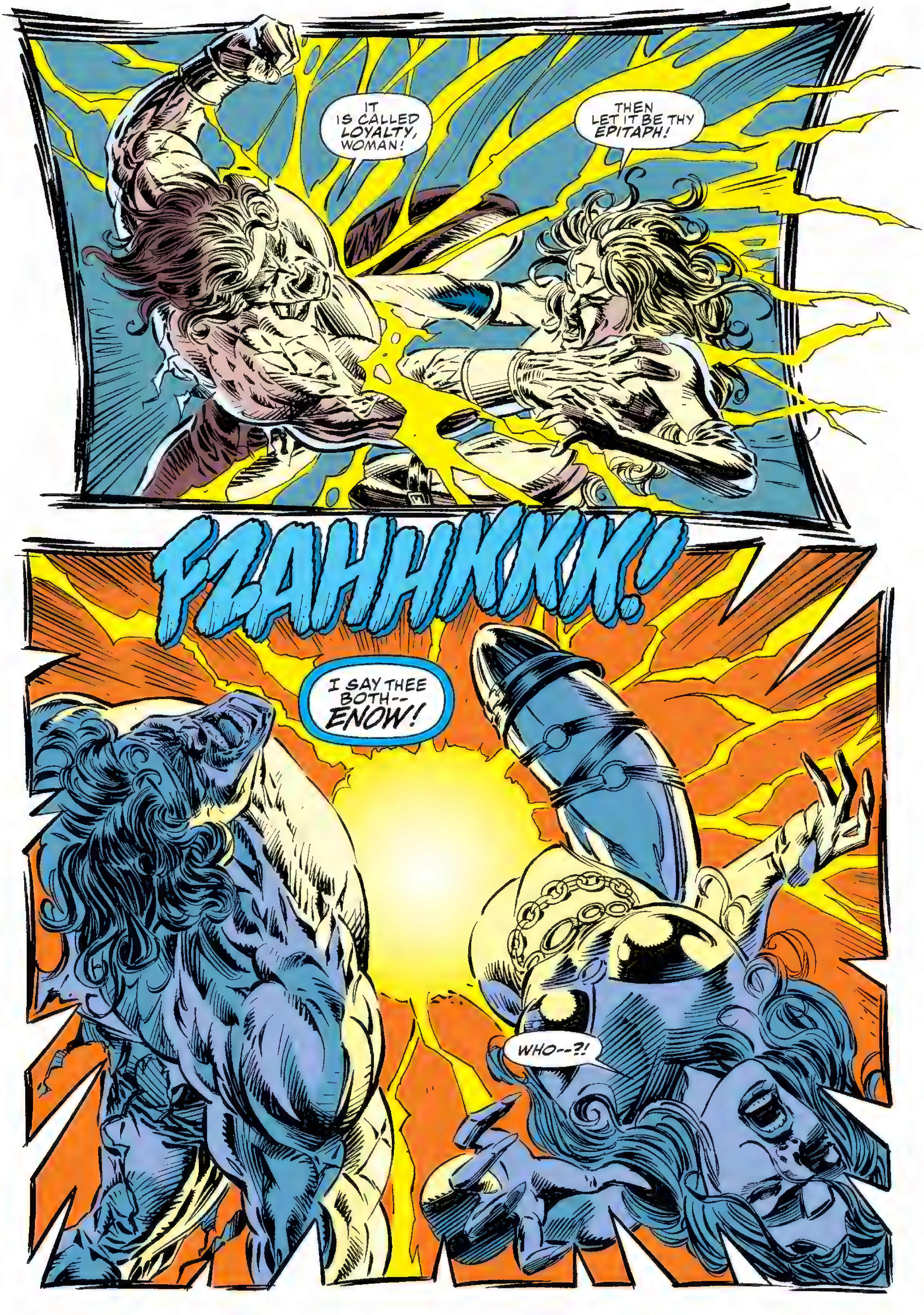

WHAT DOST THOU HERE, LADY?
MY FATHER, ZEUS HIMSELF, HATH FORBIDDEN ALL OLYMPIANS TO COME TO THE WORLD OF MORTALS.
ALL SAVE YOU, HERCULES.
AS EVER, THY FATHER HAS MADE AN EXCEPTION IN THY CASE, HALF-BREED.
YOU SPEAK OF MY FATHER WITH BITTERNESS IN THY VOICE, LADY!
AND TWICE THOU HAST INSULTED MY BIRTHRIGHT. I LIKE IT NOT, MADAME. I LIKE IT NOT.
HERCULES--
--I'D ADVISE YOU TO TAKE CARE.
SILENCE, MORTAL! 'TIS NOT YOUR PLACE TO ADVISE BEINGS SUCH AS WE!
SO, I INSULT THEE, HERCULES? PITY, THAT.
FOR YOU HAVE BEEN AN INSULT TO ME FROM THE DAY OF THY IGNOBLE BIRTH!
THOU HAST BEEN A CONSTANT, LIVING REMINDER OF MY HUSBAND'S INFIDELITIES! OF HIS FASCINATION WITH DRAB, PALE-BLOODED MORTAL FEMALES!
AND, TO THINK--HE FAVORS YOU OVER ALL HIS OTHER OFFSPRING--! THAT, HALF-MORTAL, IS INSULT UPON INSULT!
AND I WILL BEAR IT NO LONGER!
THE AVENGERS!
AND--
--APHRODITE'S BLOOD--
--TAYLOR!

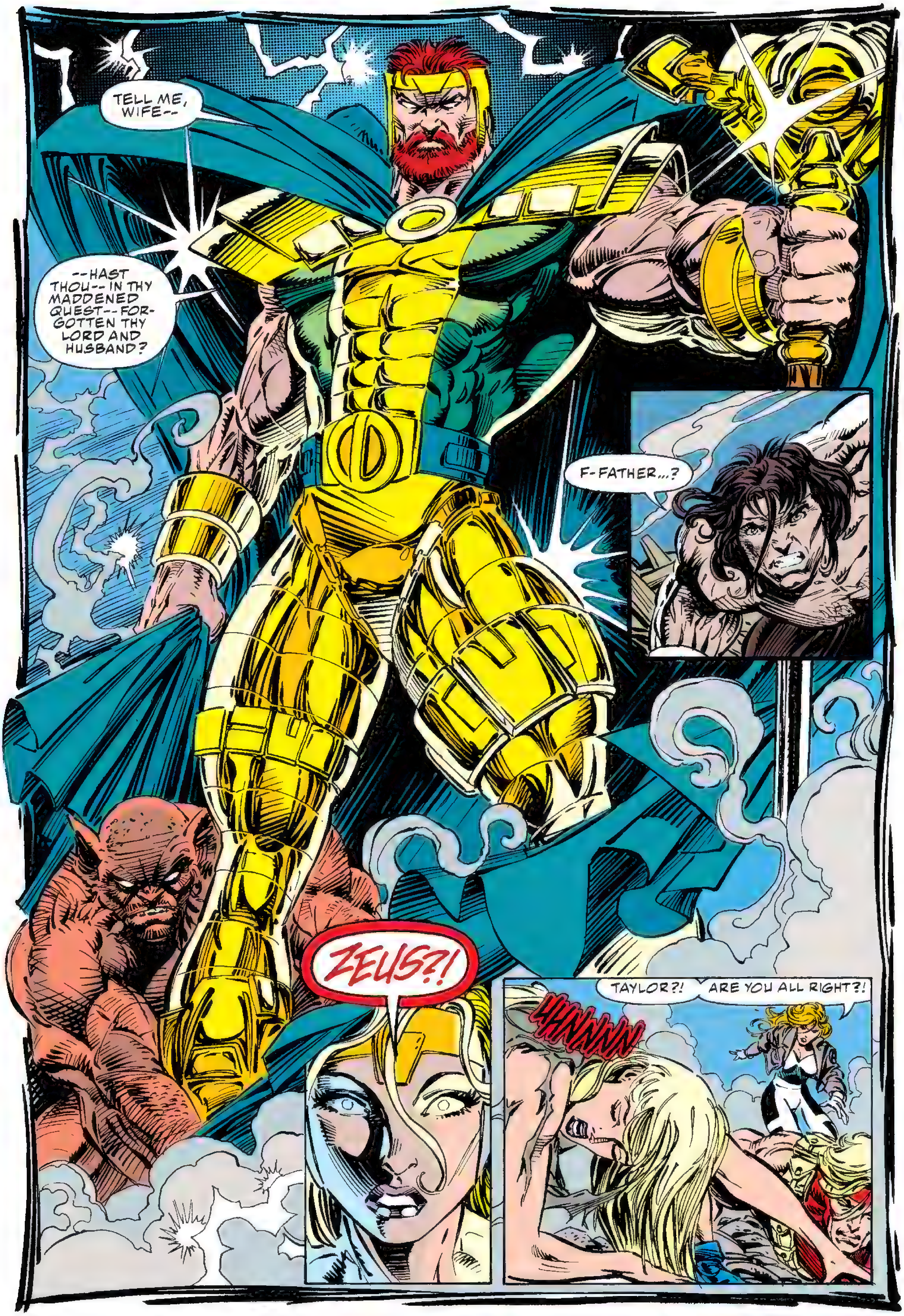

WOMAN, BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY I COULDN'T CARE *LESS* ABOUT YOUR PETTY FAMILY SQUABBLES--
--BUT, I *SWEAR*, IF YOU'VE *HARMED* MY WIFE, I'LL SEE YOU *DEAD!*
SUCH BRAVADO, AVENGER. SUCH *FOOLISHNESS*.
A WARNING, HANDSOME ONE, THAT THE *ANCIENTS* KNEW WELL WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG-- DO NOT *ANGER* THE GODS--
"--FOR OUR *RETRIBUTION* IS BOTH *QUICK* AND *FINAL*."
WHAMM!
UGGH!
PIETRO...?
GOOD FRIEND, PRITHEE *BREATHE* FOR ME... EVEN A LITTLE.
SWEET ZEUS, *NO!*
LADY, SURELY THOU MUST BE *MAD* TO DO SUCH SAVAGERY!

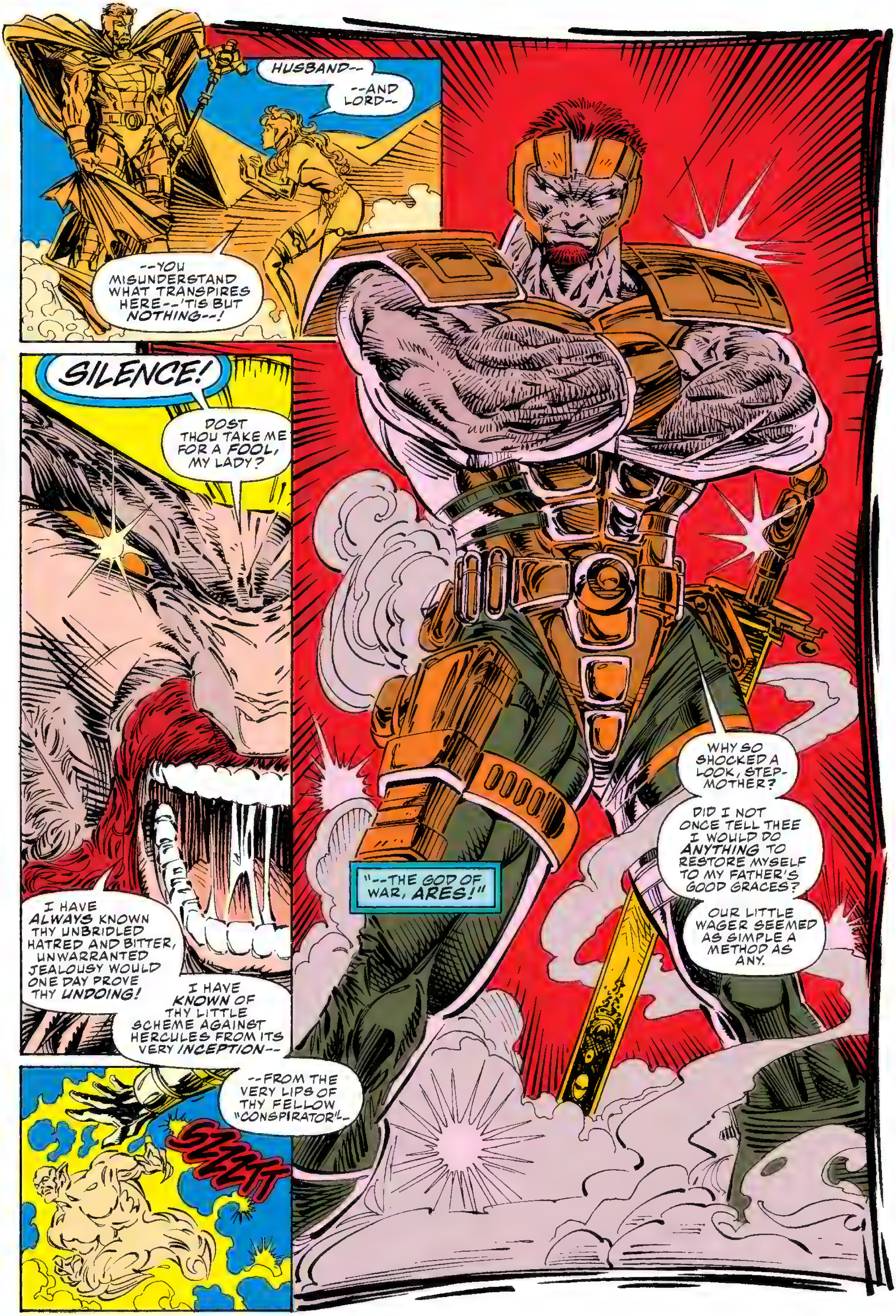

I THINK NOT.
I MERELY SEEK REDRESS FOR CENTURIES OF HUMILIATION.
THOU CARES FOR THESE MORTALS, DO YOU NOT? A WEAKNESS INHERITED FROM THY FATHER.
YOU HAVE BOTH FORGOTTEN. THEY ARE NOTHING!
MERE PAWNS IN THE GREAT GAMES OF THE GODS.
ARR RGH!
OUR PLAYTHINGS, SHEATHED IN THIN SHELLS OF CORRUPTIBLE FLESH AS EASY TO WITHER AS GRAPES ON THE VINE.
JARVIS!
LEAVE HIM ALONE, HERA! HE IS A MAN BOTH GOOD AND TRUE AND HATH DONE YOU NO HARM!
BUT THOU DOTH CARE FOR HIS WELFARE, STEPSON--
ZZZZAAPP!
--'TIS CRIME ENOUGH FOR ME!

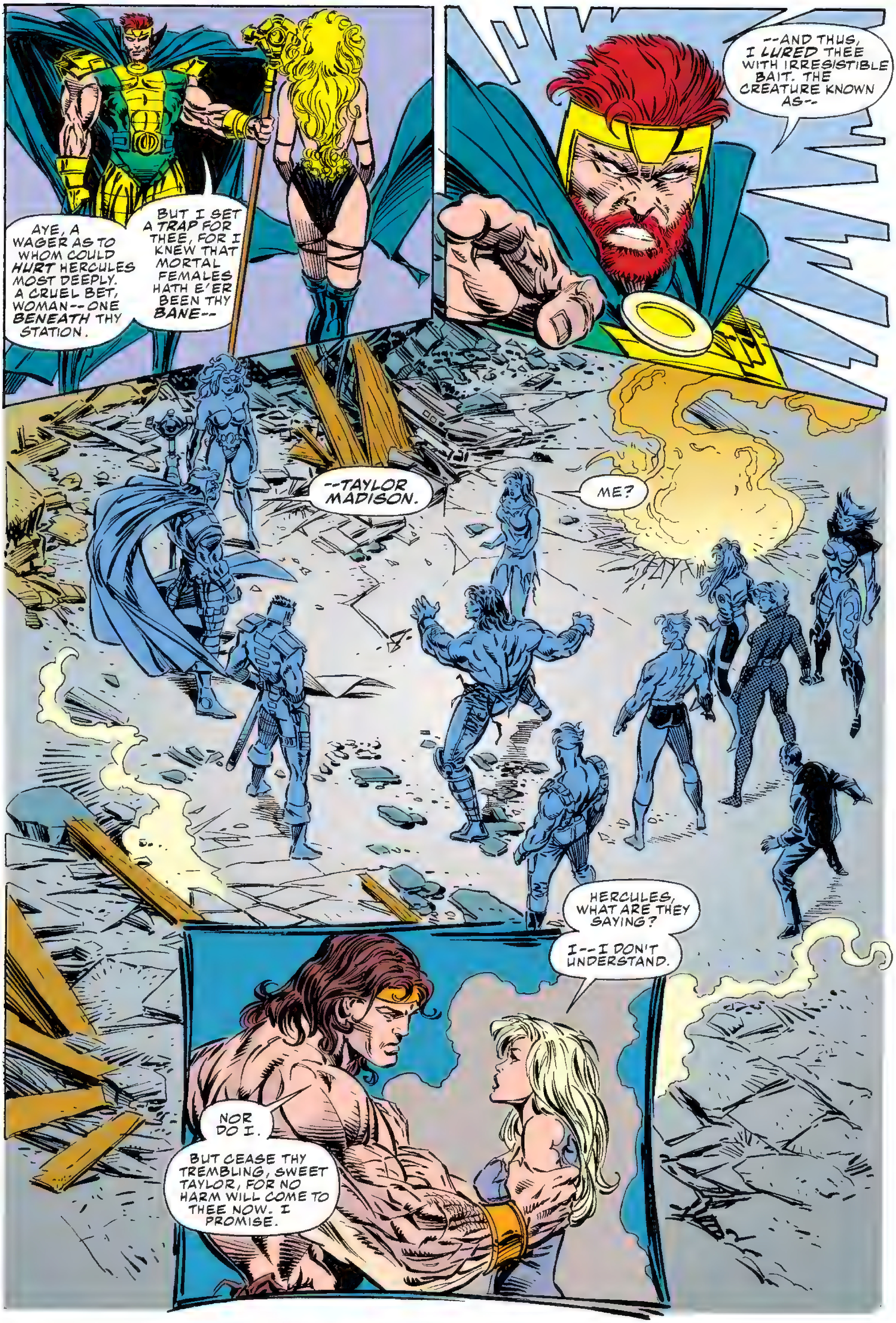

RRIIIIPP!
I HAVE EVER TREATED THEE WITH *RESPECT*, HERA --AS WAS DUE MY FATHER'S WIFE!
BUT HATE HAS *TWISTED* THY SOUL!
AND MY FRIENDS SHALL *NOT* SUFFER AT THY HANDS ANY LONGER--THIS DO I *SWEAR!*
AN EMPTY BOAST FROM A *DULLARD.*
KRASKK!
FOR THEY SHALL SUFFER *PRECISELY* BECAUSE THEY *ARE* THY FRIENDS.
THY HEART SHALL BREAK *BIT BY BIT* AS EACH MORTAL FLAME FLICKERS THEN FADES.
AND HOW GREAT THE PAIN SHALL BE WHEN *THIS* ONE--THY BELOVED *TAYLOR*--TURNS TO DUST, HERCULES.
THEN YOU WILL *KNOW* WHAT I HAVE SUFFERED--AND YOU WILL KNOW THE *WRATH* OF *HERA!*

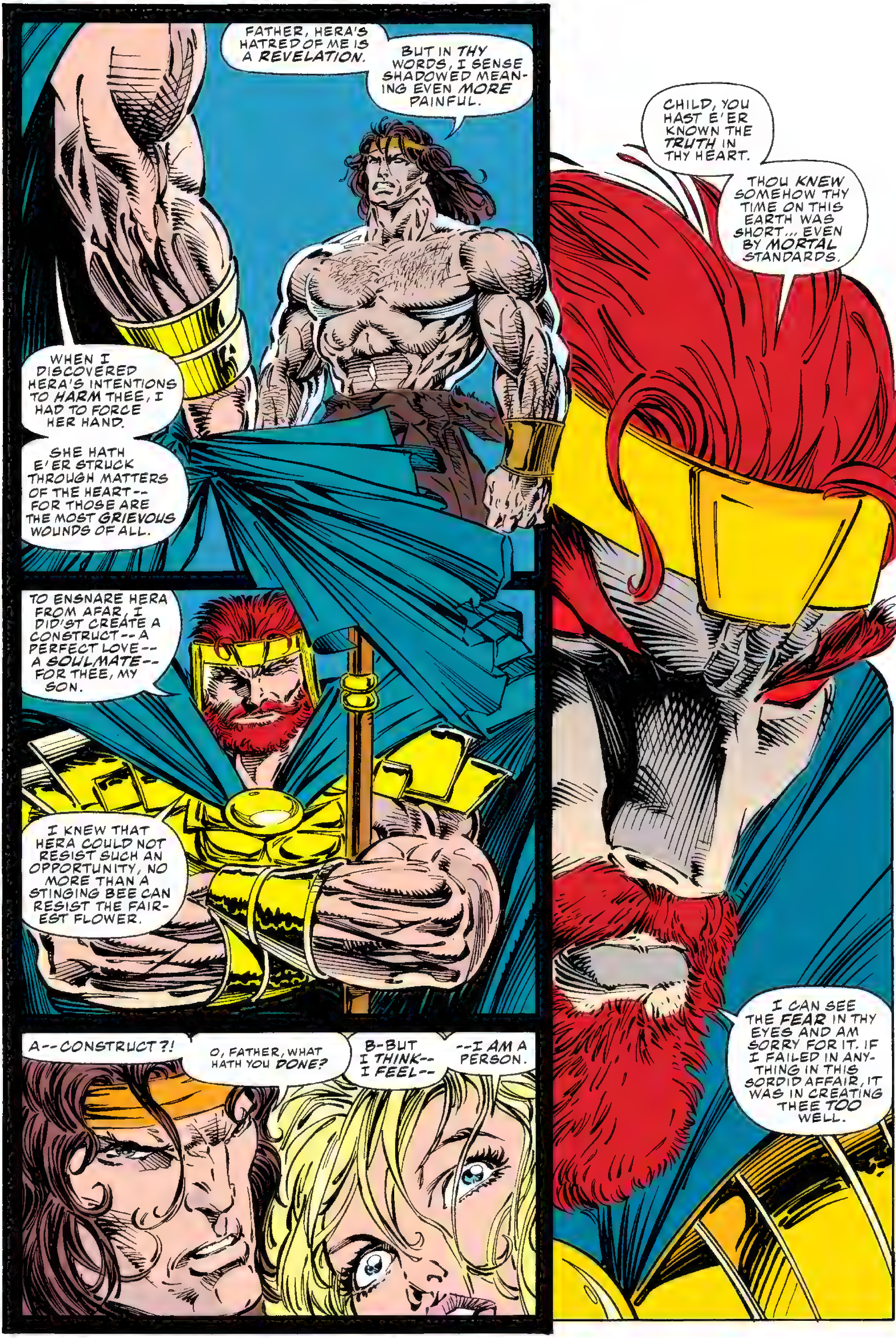

LADY, I SWEAR IN ORDER TO STOP THEE--
--I WILL KILL THEE!
OH, NO, HERCULES--
FZZAKKK!
--YOU'LL NOT DENY ME MY VICTORY!
FAZHAKK!
DO WHAT THOU WILL TO ME!
BUT--
--LET MY FRIENDS GO!
YOU-- APPROACH-- THROUGH MY ELDRITCH FLAME?! IMPRESSIVE, HALF-BREED--
--IMPRESSIVE.

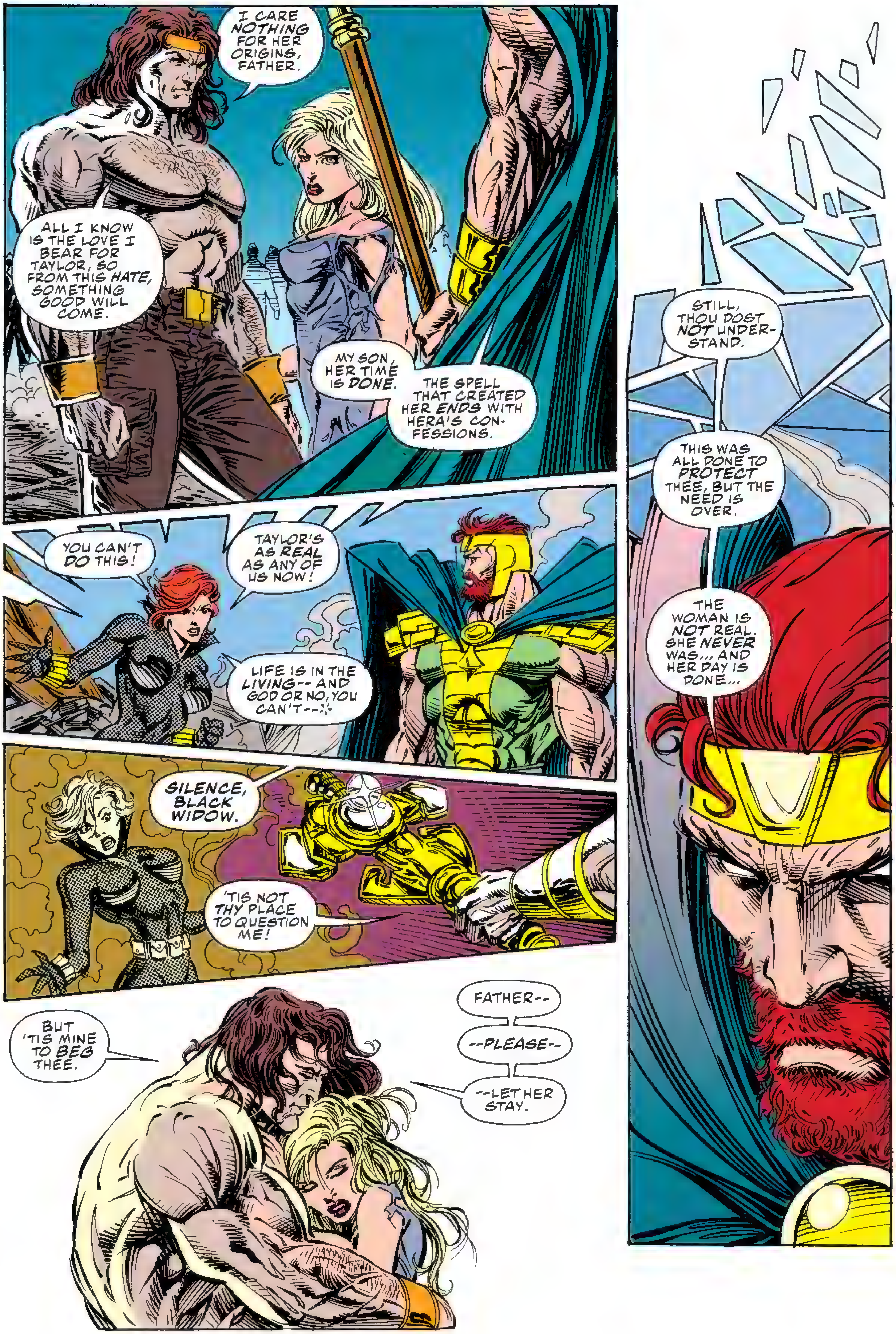

IT IS CALLED LOYALTY, WOMAN!
THEN LET IT BE THY EPITAPH!
FZAHHKKKK!
I SAY THEE BOTH-- ENOW!
WHO--?!

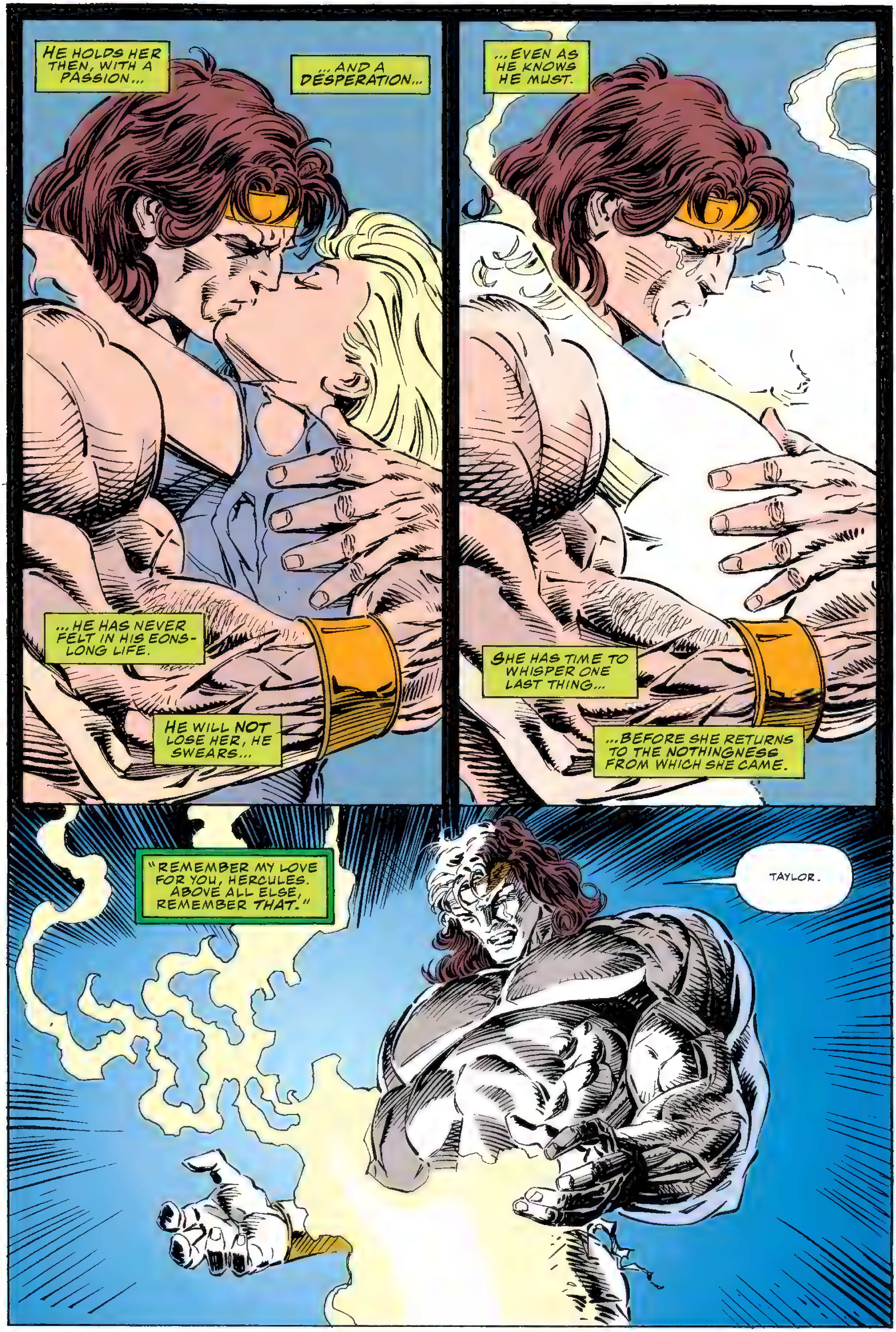

TELL ME, WIFE--
--HAST THOU-- IN THY MADDENED QUEST-- FORGOTTEN THY LORD AND HUSBAND?
F-FATHER...?
ZEUS?!
UHNNNN
TAYLOR?!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

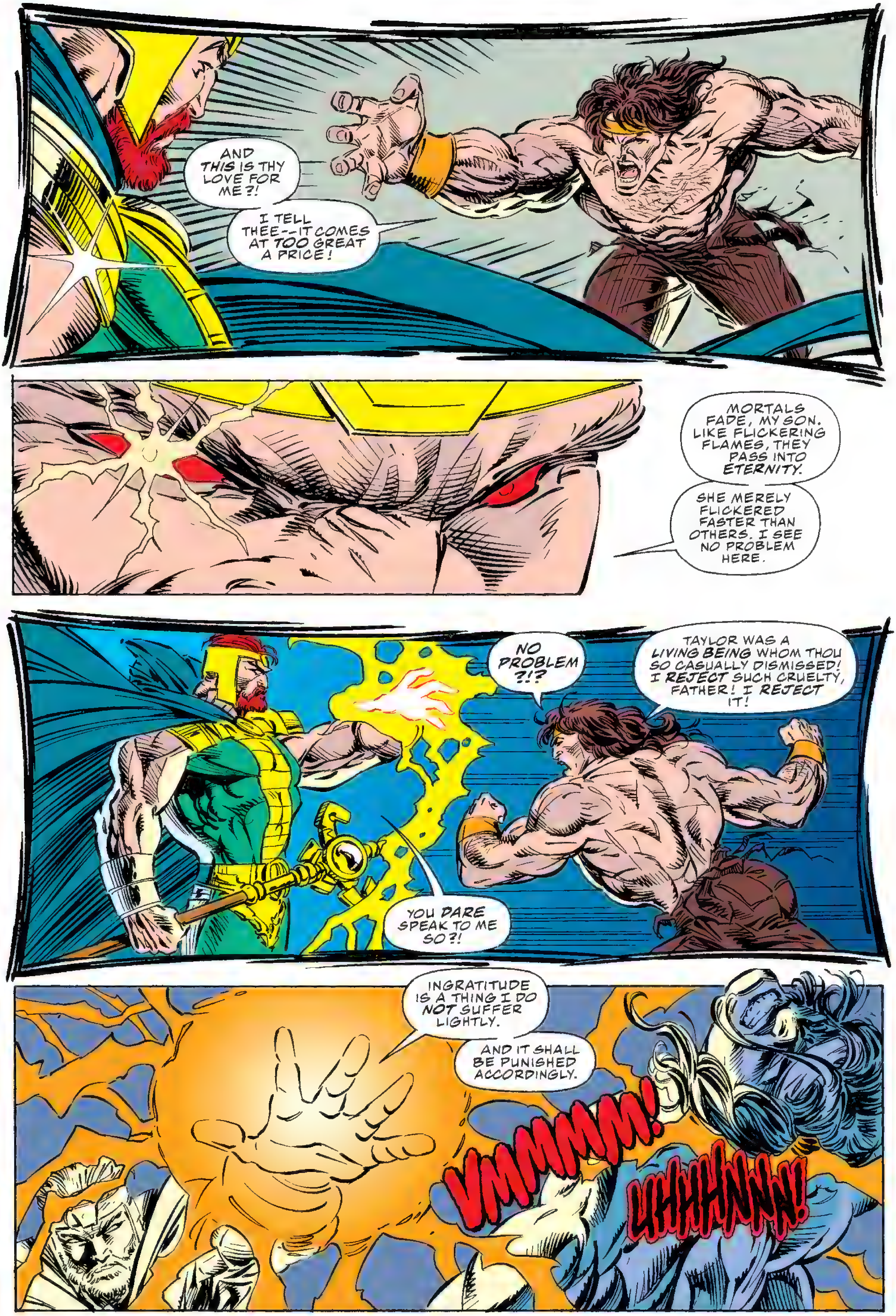

HUSBAND--
--AND LORD--
--YOU MISUNDERSTAND WHAT TRANSPIRES HERE--'TIS BUT NOTHING--!
SILENCE!
DOST THOU TAKE ME FOR A *FOOL,* MY LADY?
I HAVE *ALWAYS* KNOWN THY UNBRIDLED HATRED AND BITTER, UNWARRANTED JEALOUSY WOULD ONE DAY PROVE THY *UNDOING!*
I HAVE *KNOWN* OF THY LITTLE SCHEME AGAINST HERCULES FROM ITS VERY *INCEPTION*--
--FROM THE VERY LIPS OF THY FELLOW "CONSPIRATOR"!--
SZZZT
"--THE GOD OF WAR, *ARES!*"
WHY SO SHOCKED A LOOK, STEP-MOTHER?
DID I NOT ONCE TELL THEE I WOULD DO *ANYTHING* TO RESTORE MYSELF TO MY FATHER'S GOOD GRACES?
OUR LITTLE WAGER SEEMED AS SIMPLE A METHOD AS ANY.

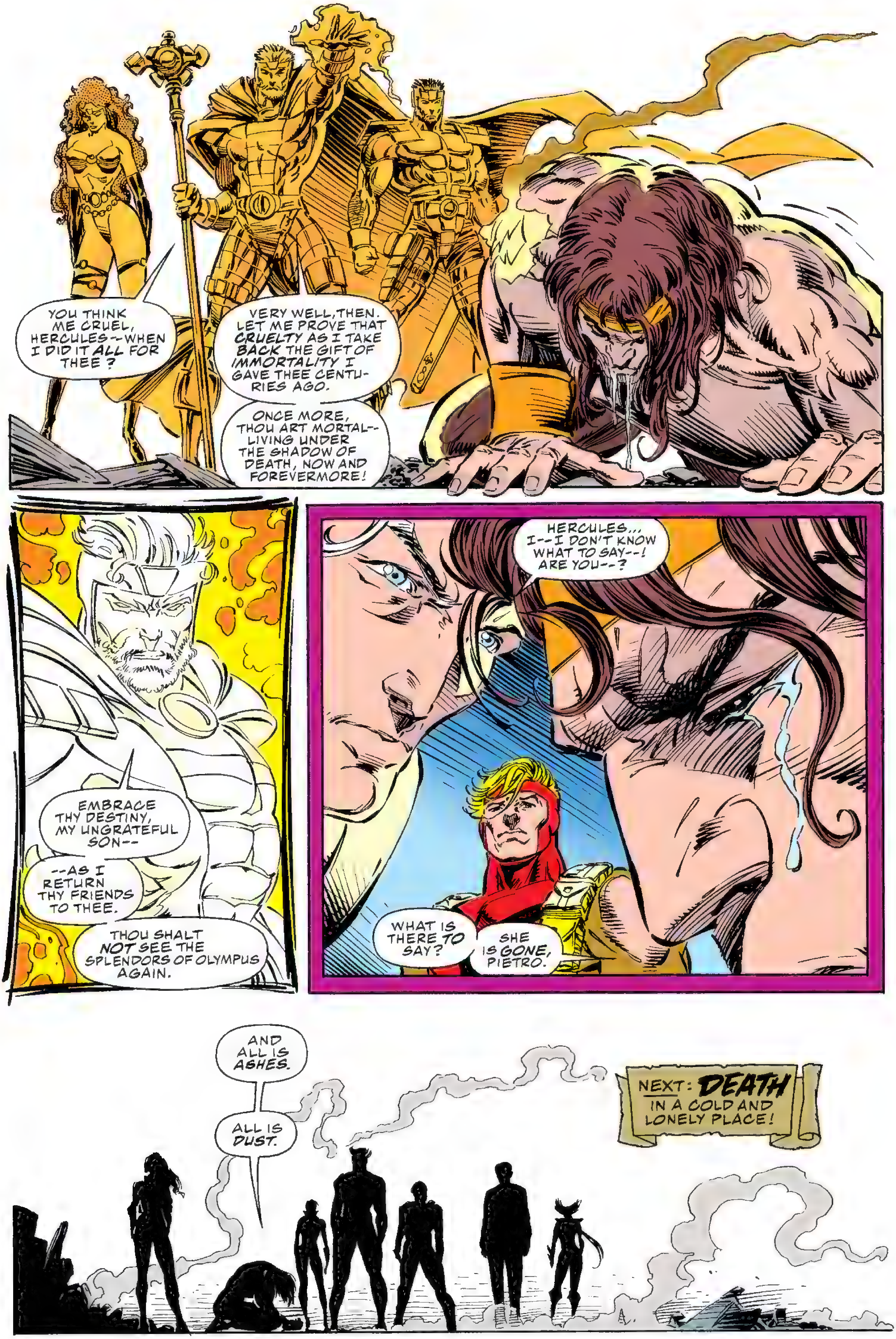

AYE, A WAGER AS TO WHOM COULD *HURT* HERCULES MOST DEEPLY. A CRUEL BET, WOMAN--ONE *BENEATH* THY STATION.
BUT I SET A *TRAP* FOR THEE, FOR I KNEW THAT MORTAL FEMALES HATH E'ER BEEN THY *BANE*--
--AND THUS, I *LURED* THEE WITH IRRESISTIBLE BAIT. THE CREATURE KNOWN AS--
--TAYLOR MADISON.
ME?
HERCULES, WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?
I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
NOR DO I.
BUT CEASE THY TREMBLING, SWEET TAYLOR, FOR NO HARM WILL COME TO THEE NOW. I PROMISE.


FATHER, HERA'S HATRED OF ME IS A *REVELATION.*
BUT IN *THY* WORDS, I SENSE SHADOWED MEANING EVEN *MORE* PAINFUL.
WHEN I DISCOVERED HERA'S INTENTIONS TO *HARM* THEE, I HAD TO FORCE HER HAND.
SHE HATH E'ER STRUCK THROUGH MATTERS OF THE HEART--FOR THOSE ARE THE MOST *GRIEVOUS* WOUNDS OF ALL.
CHILD, YOU HAST E'ER KNOWN THE *TRUTH* IN THY HEART.
THOU *KNEW* SOMEHOW THY TIME ON THIS EARTH WAS SHORT... EVEN BY *MORTAL* STANDARDS.
TO ENSNARE HERA FROM AFAR, I DID'ST CREATE A CONSTRUCT--A PERFECT LOVE--A *SOULMATE*--FOR THEE, MY SON.
I KNEW THAT HERA COULD NOT RESIST SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY, NO MORE THAN A STINGING BEE CAN RESIST THE FAIREST FLOWER.
A--CONSTRUCT?!
O, FATHER, WHAT HATH YOU *DONE?*
B-BUT I *THINK*--I *FEEL*--
--I *AM* A PERSON.
I CAN SEE THE *FEAR* IN THY EYES AND AM SORRY FOR IT. IF I FAILED IN ANYTHING IN THIS SORDID AFFAIR, IT WAS IN CREATING THEE *TOO* WELL.

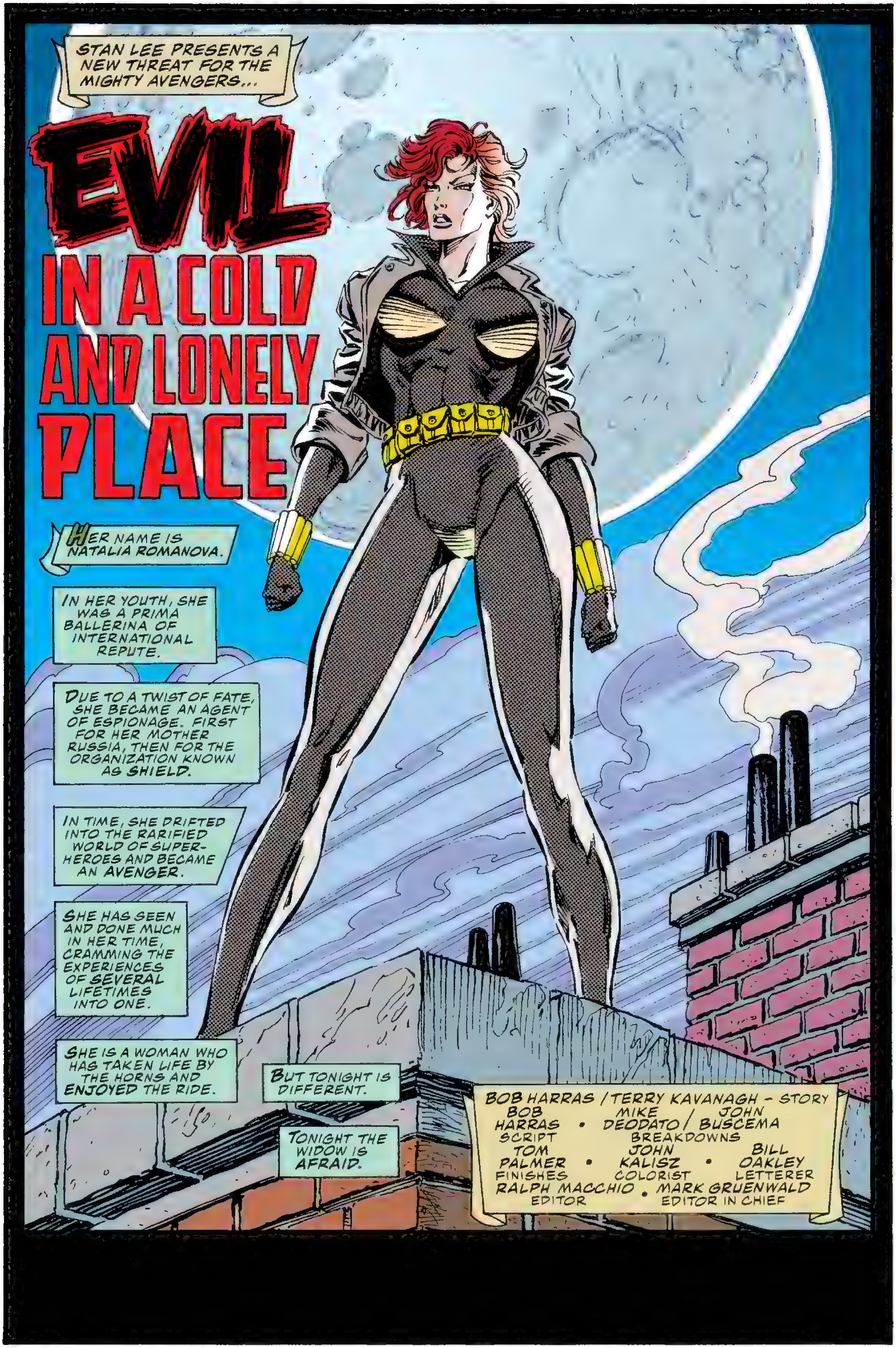

I CARE NOTHING FOR HER ORIGINS, FATHER.
ALL I KNOW IS THE LOVE I BEAR FOR TAYLOR, SO FROM THIS HATE, SOMETHING GOOD WILL COME.
MY SON, HER TIME IS DONE.
THE SPELL THAT CREATED HER ENDS WITH HERA'S CONFESSIONS.
YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
TAYLOR'S AS REAL AS ANY OF US NOW!
LIFE IS IN THE LIVING-- AND GOD OR NO, YOU CAN'T--!
SILENCE, BLACK WIDOW.
'TIS NOT THY PLACE TO QUESTION ME!
BUT 'TIS MINE TO BEG THEE.
FATHER--
--PLEASE--
--LET HER STAY.
STILL, THOU DOST NOT UNDERSTAND.
THIS WAS ALL DONE TO PROTECT THEE, BUT THE NEED IS OVER.
THE WOMAN IS NOT REAL. SHE NEVER WAS... AND HER DAY IS DONE...


HE HOLDS HER THEN, WITH A PASSION...
...AND A DESPERATION...
...HE HAS NEVER FELT IN HIS EONS-LONG LIFE.
HE WILL NOT LOSE HER, HE SWEARS...
...EVEN AS HE KNOWS HE MUST.
SHE HAS TIME TO WHISPER ONE LAST THING...
...BEFORE SHE RETURNS TO THE NOTHINGNESS FROM WHICH SHE CAME.
"REMEMBER MY LOVE FOR YOU, HERCULES. ABOVE ALL ELSE, REMEMBER THAT."
TAYLOR.

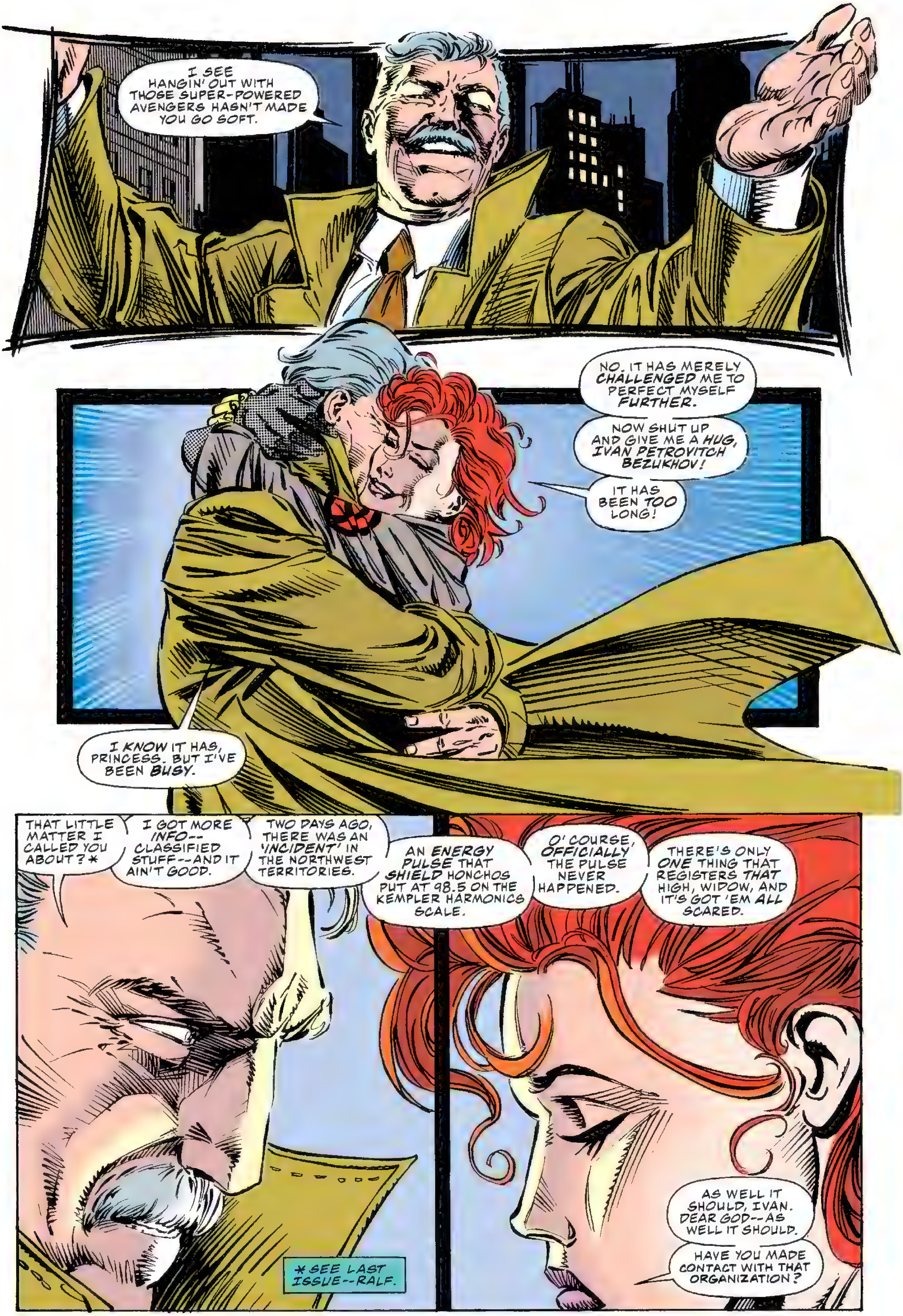

AND THIS IS THY LOVE FOR ME?!
I TELL THEE--IT COMES AT TOO GREAT A PRICE!
MORTALS FADE, MY SON. LIKE FLICKERING FLAMES, THEY PASS INTO ETERNITY.
SHE MERELY FLICKERED FASTER THAN OTHERS. I SEE NO PROBLEM HERE.
NO PROBLEM ?!?
TAYLOR WAS A LIVING BEING WHOM THOU SO CASUALLY DISMISSED! I REJECT SUCH CRUELTY, FATHER! I REJECT IT!
YOU DARE SPEAK TO ME SO?!
INGRATITUDE IS A THING I DO NOT SUFFER LIGHTLY.
AND IT SHALL BE PUNISHED ACCORDINGLY.
VMMMMM!
UHHHNNN!

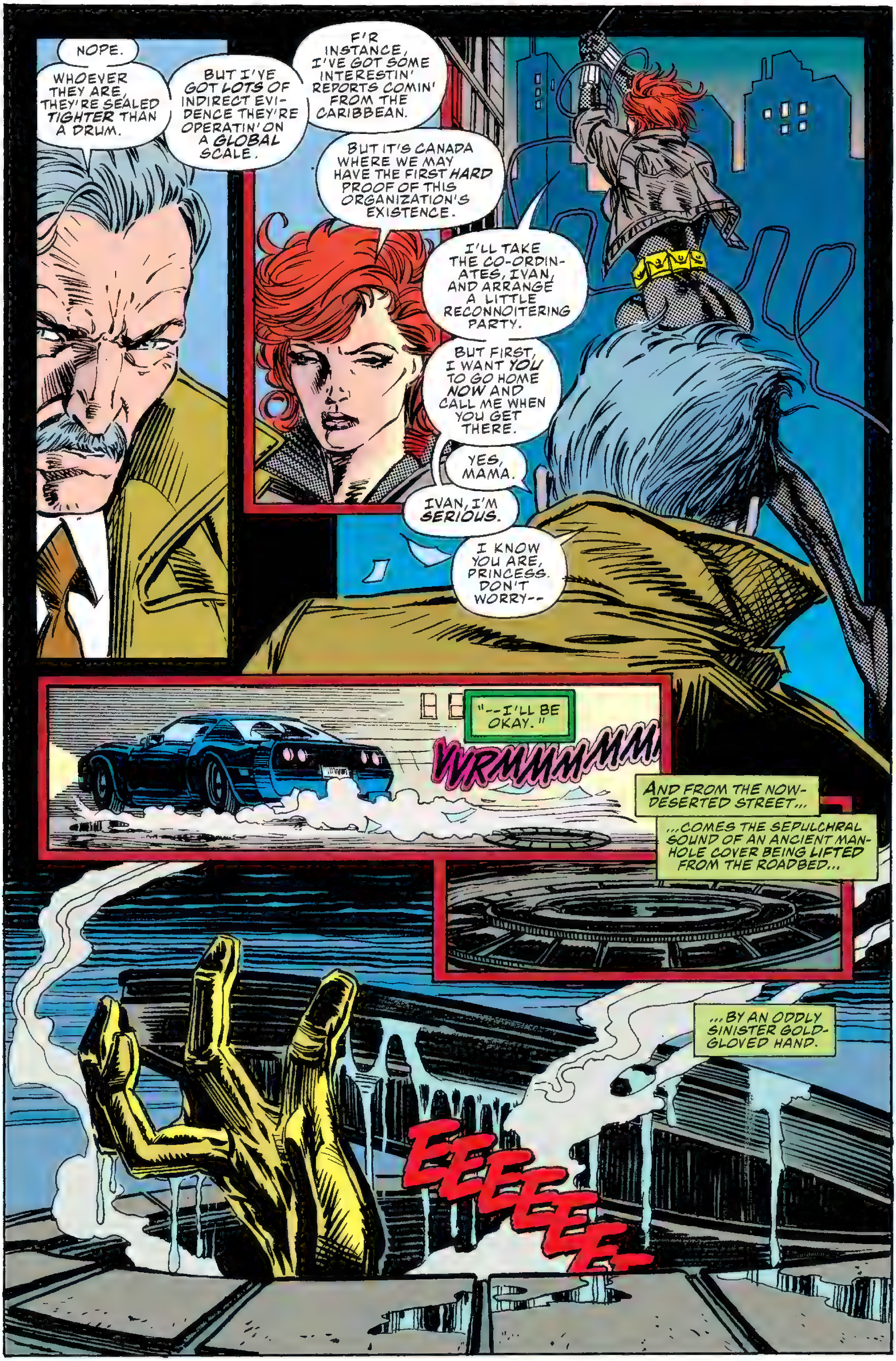

YOU THINK ME CRUEL, HERCULES--WHEN I DID IT ALL FOR THEE?
VERY WELL, THEN. LET ME PROVE THAT CRUELTY AS I TAKE BACK THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY I GAVE THEE CENTURIES AGO.
ONCE MORE, THOU ART MORTAL--LIVING UNDER THE SHADOW OF DEATH, NOW AND FOREVERMORE!
EMBRACE THY DESTINY, MY UNGRATEFUL SON--
--AS I RETURN THY FRIENDS TO THEE.
THOU SHALT NOT SEE THE SPLENDORS OF OLYMPUS AGAIN.
HERCULES... I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY--! ARE YOU--?
WHAT IS THERE TO SAY?
SHE IS GONE, PIETRO.
AND ALL IS ASHES.
ALL IS DUST.
NEXT: DEATH IN A COLD AND LONELY PLACE!

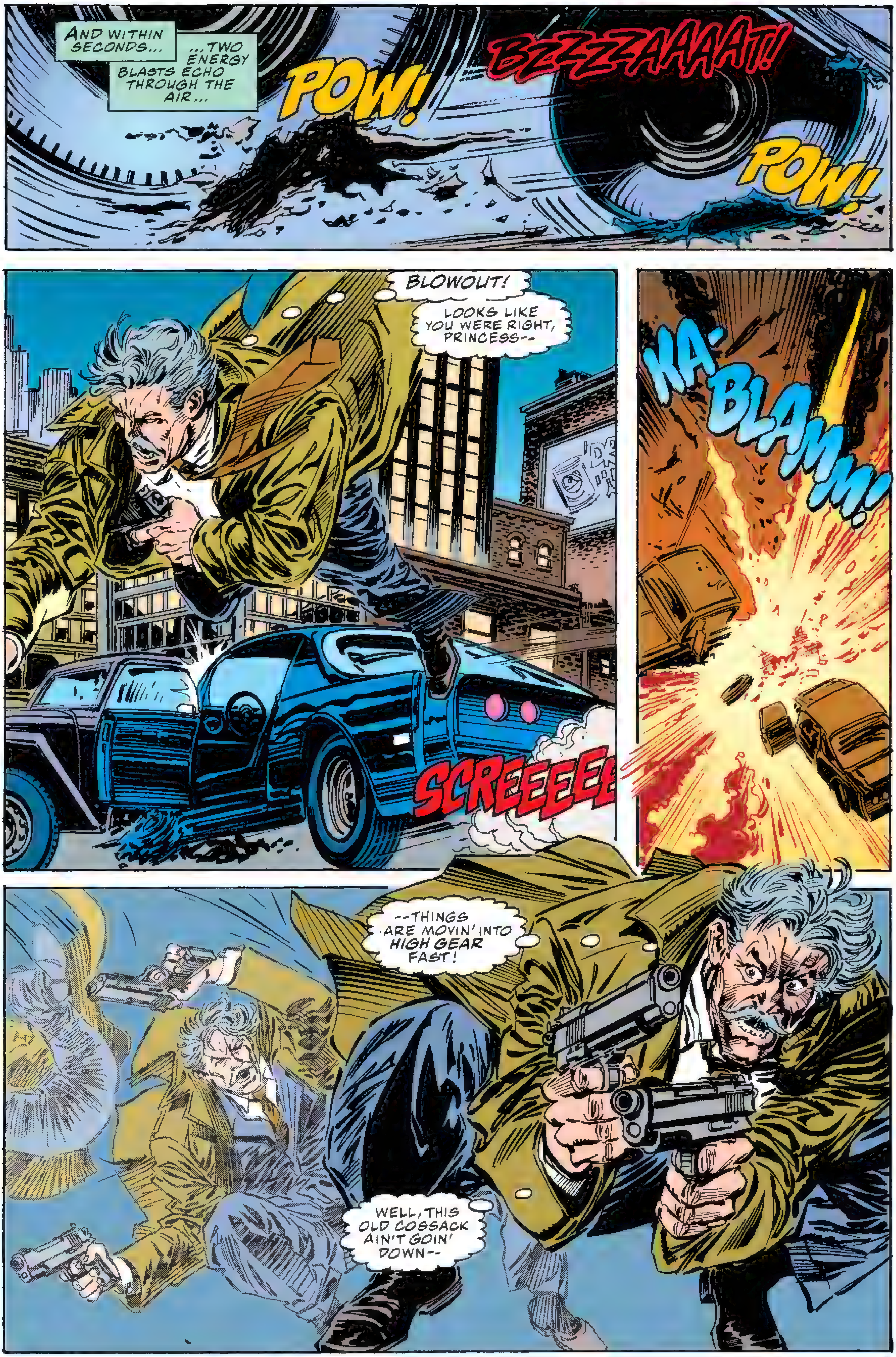
MARVEL COMICS
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
385
APR '95

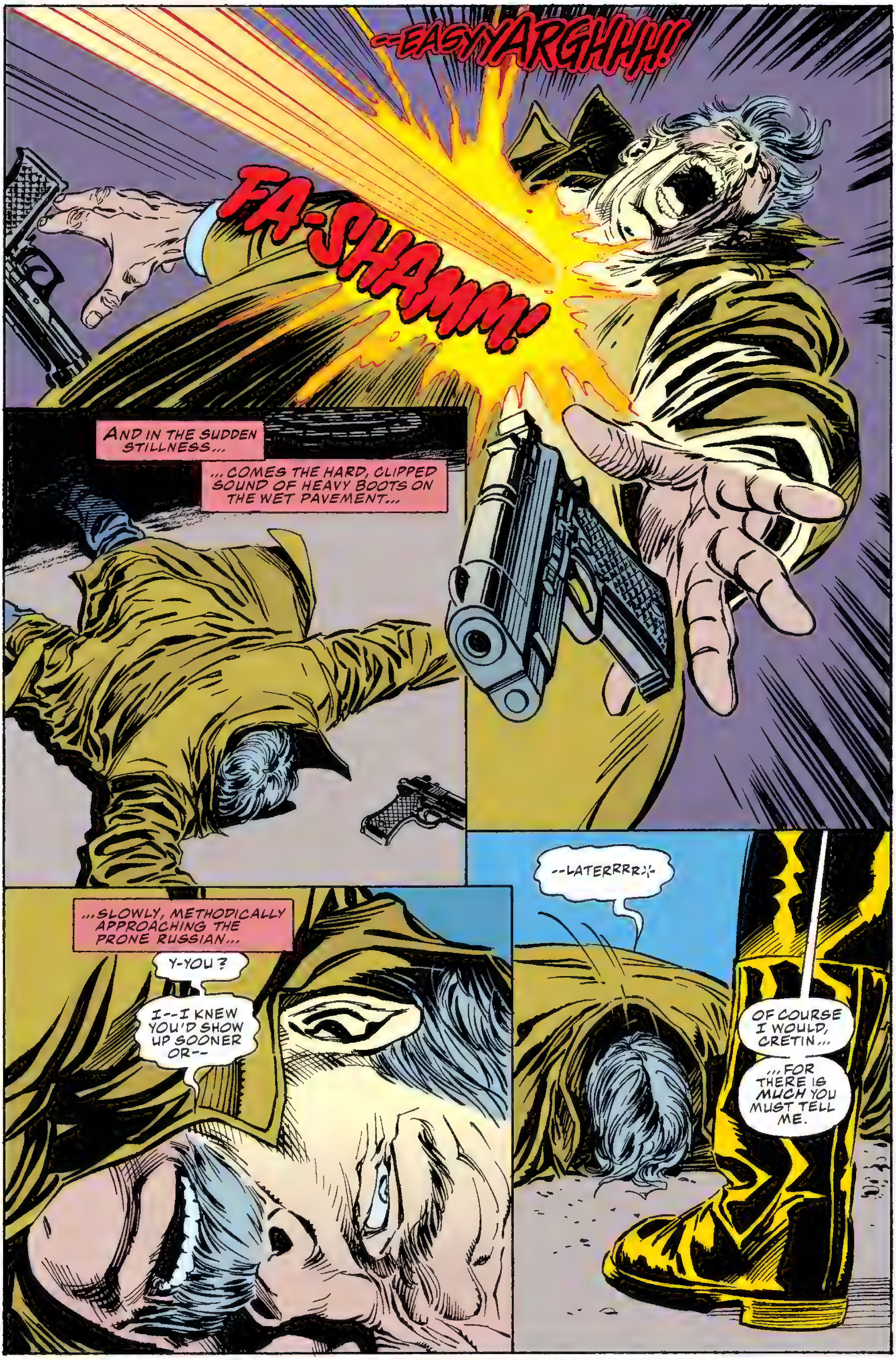

STAN LEE PRESENTS A NEW THREAT FOR THE MIGHTY AVENGERS...
EVIL IN A COLD AND LONELY PLACE
HER NAME IS NATALIA ROMANOVA.
IN HER YOUTH, SHE WAS A PRIMA BALLERINA OF INTERNATIONAL REPUTE.
DUE TO A TWIST OF FATE, SHE BECAME AN AGENT OF ESPIONAGE. FIRST FOR HER MOTHER RUSSIA, THEN FOR THE ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS SHIELD.
IN TIME, SHE DRIFTED INTO THE RARIFIED WORLD OF SUPER-HEROES AND BECAME AN AVENGER.
SHE HAS SEEN AND DONE MUCH IN HER TIME, CRAMMING THE EXPERIENCES OF SEVERAL LIFETIMES INTO ONE.
SHE IS A WOMAN WHO HAS TAKEN LIFE BY THE HORNS AND ENJOYED THE RIDE.
BUT TONIGHT IS DIFFERENT.
TONIGHT THE WIDOW IS AFRAID.
BOB HARRAS / TERRY KAVANAGH - STORY
BOB HARRAS • SCRIPT
MIKE DEODATO / JOHN BUSCEMA BREAKDOWNS
TOM PALMER • FINISHES
JOHN KALISZ • COLORIST
BILL OAKLEY LETTERER
RALPH MACCHIO • EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD EDITOR IN CHIEF

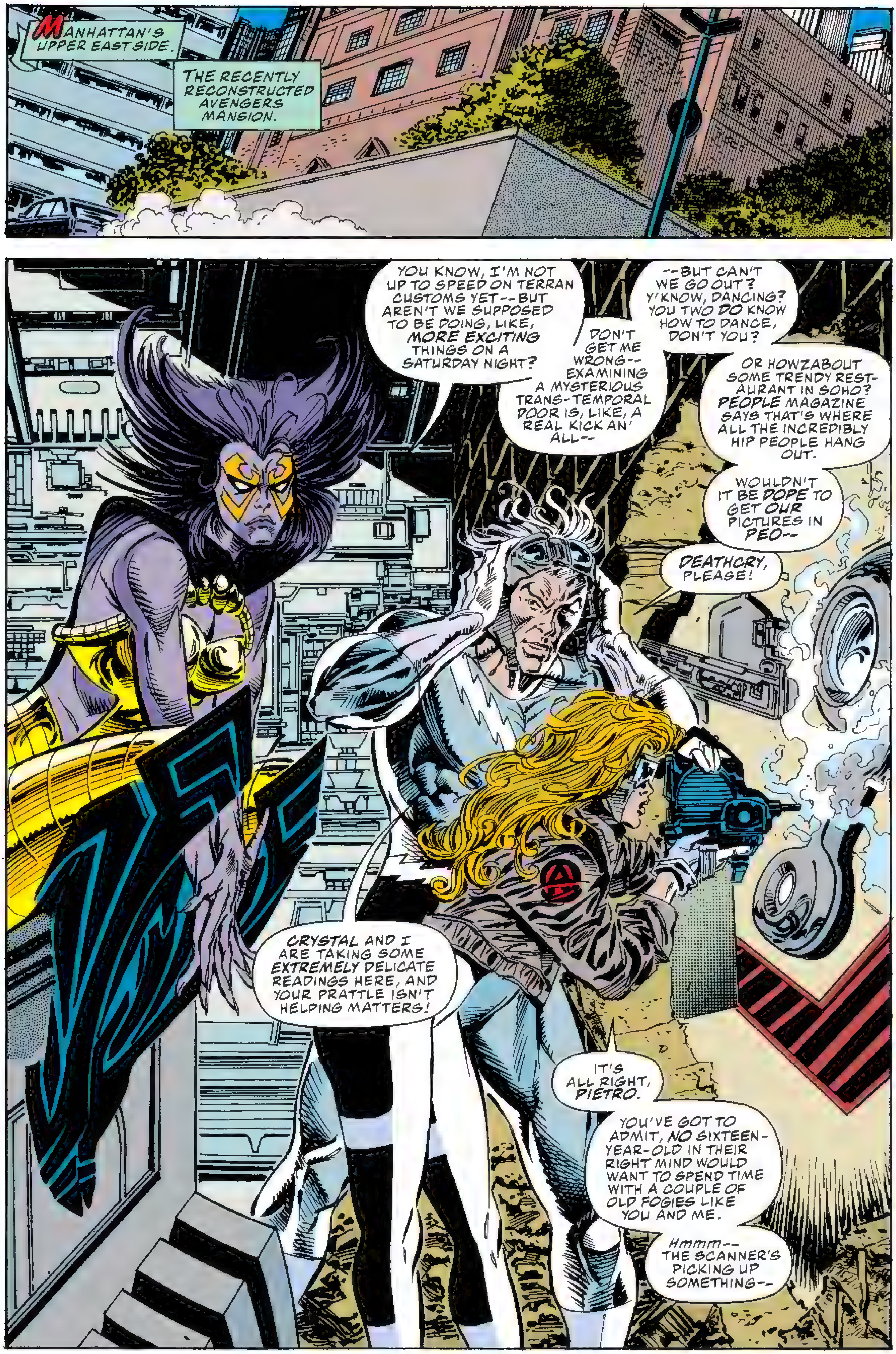
IT IS AN EMOTION SHE DOES NOT LIKE.
AS SHE THROWS HERSELF INTO THE ABYSS, FORTY-FOUR STORIES ABOVE THE STREETS OF MANHATTAN--
--AND CONTROLS HER DESCENT LIKE THE SUPERB OLYMPIC ATHLETE SHE IS--
--THE BLACK WIDOW DOES WHAT SHE HAS ALWAYS DONE.
SHE PUSHES FEAR ASIDE.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE.
NOT BAD, PRINCESS.
A LITTLE SLOPPY ON LANDING--BUT ALL IN ALL, NOT BAD.

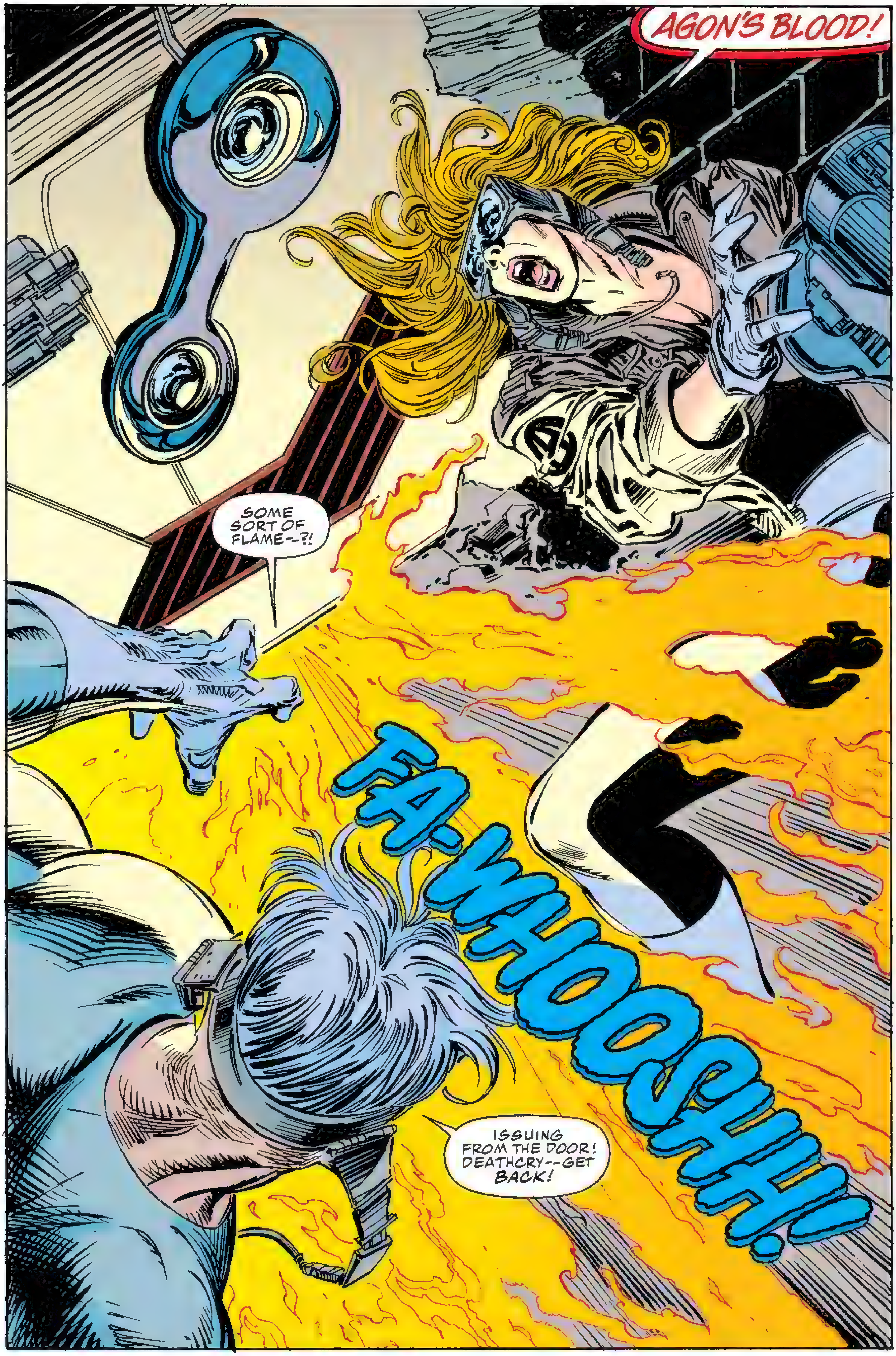

I SEE HANGIN' OUT WITH THOSE SUPER-POWERED AVENGERS HASN'T MADE YOU GO SOFT.
NO. IT HAS MERELY *CHALLENGED* ME TO PERFECT MYSELF *FURTHER.*
NOW SHUT UP AND GIVE ME A *HUG, IVAN PETROVITCH BEZUKHOV!*
IT HAS BEEN *TOO* LONG!
I *KNOW* IT HAS, PRINCESS. BUT I'VE BEEN *BUSY.*
THAT LITTLE MATTER I CALLED YOU ABOUT?*
I GOT MORE *INFO*-- CLASSIFIED STUFF--AND IT AIN'T GOOD.
TWO DAYS AGO, THERE WAS AN '*INCIDENT*' IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES.
AN *ENERGY PULSE* THAT *SHIELD* HONCHOS PUT AT 98.5 ON THE KEMPLER HARMONICS SCALE.
O' COURSE, *OFFICIALLY* THE PULSE NEVER HAPPENED.
THERE'S ONLY *ONE* THING THAT REGISTERS *THAT* HIGH, WIDOW, AND IT'S GOT 'EM *ALL* SCARED.
*SEE LAST ISSUE--RALF.
AS WELL IT SHOULD, IVAN. DEAR GOD--AS WELL IT SHOULD.
HAVE YOU MADE CONTACT WITH THAT ORGANIZATION?

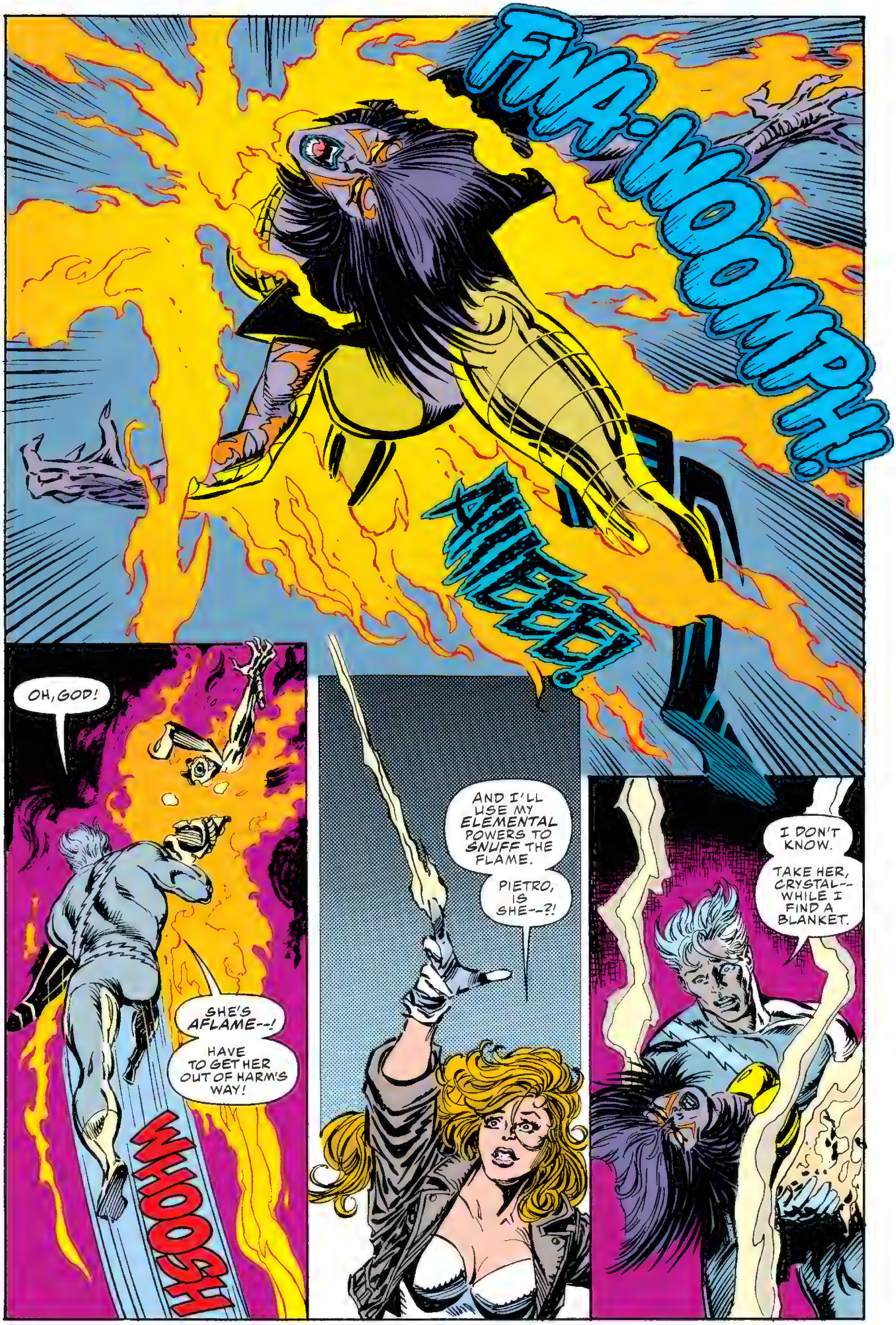

NOPE.
WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE SEALED *TIGHTER* THAN A DRUM.
BUT I'VE GOT *LOTS* OF INDIRECT EVIDENCE THEY'RE OPERATIN' ON A *GLOBAL* SCALE.
F'R INSTANCE, I'VE GOT SOME INTERESTIN' REPORTS COMIN' FROM THE CARIBBEAN.
BUT IT'S CANADA WHERE WE MAY HAVE THE FIRST *HARD* PROOF OF THIS ORGANIZATION'S EXISTENCE.
I'LL TAKE THE CO-ORDINATES, IVAN, AND ARRANGE A LITTLE RECONNOITERING PARTY.
BUT FIRST, I WANT *YOU* TO GO HOME *NOW* AND CALL ME WHEN YOU GET THERE.
YES, MAMA.
IVAN, I'M *SERIOUS*.
I KNOW YOU ARE, PRINCESS. DON'T WORRY--
"--I'LL BE OKAY."
VVRMMMMMM
AND FROM THE NOW-DESERTED STREET...
...COMES THE SEPULCHRAL SOUND OF AN ANCIENT MANHOLE COVER BEING *LIFTED* FROM THE ROADBED...
...BY AN ODDLY SINISTER GOLD-GLOVED HAND.
EEEEEEE-

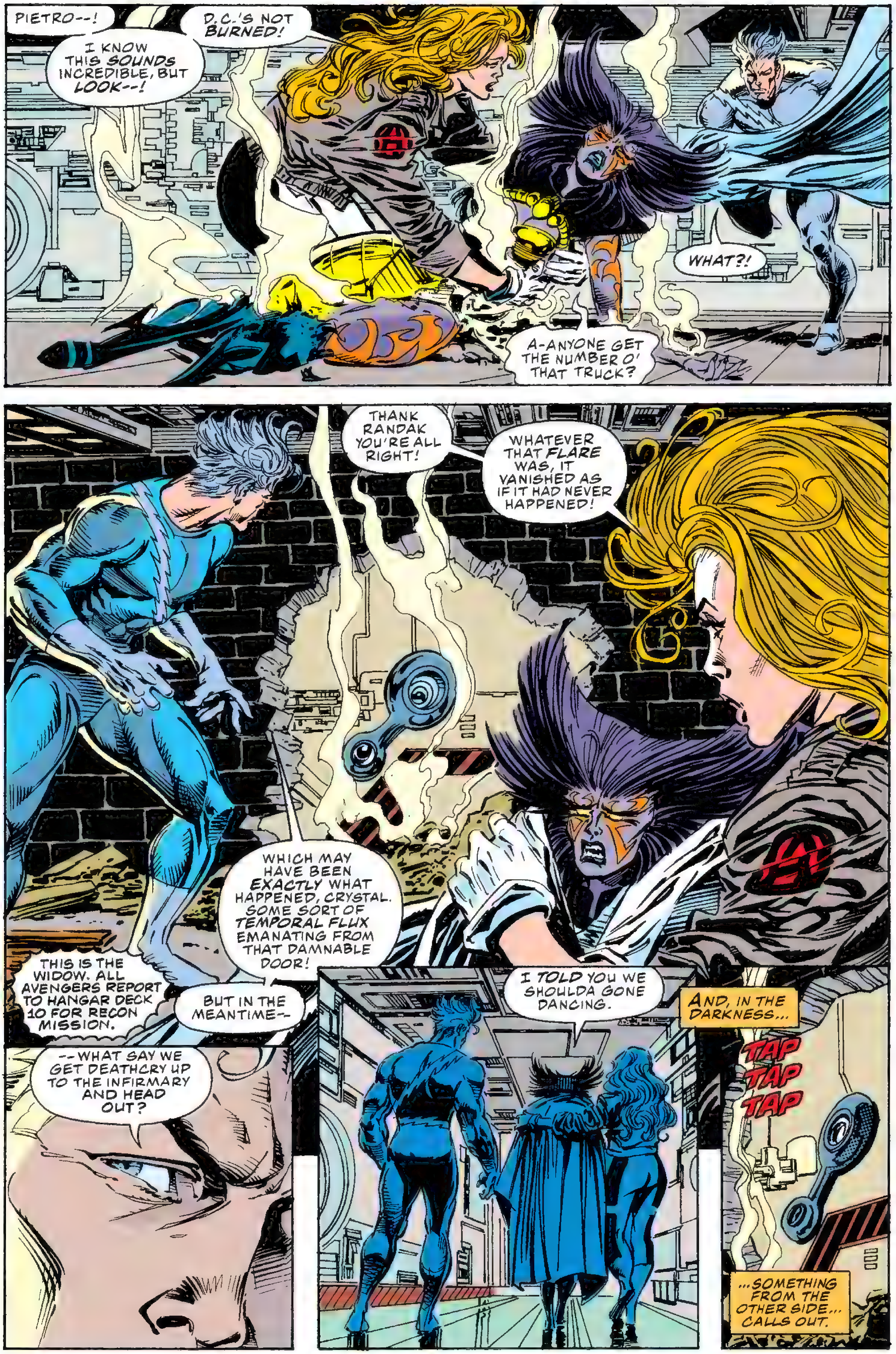

AND WITHIN SECONDS...
...TWO ENERGY BLASTS ECHO THROUGH THE AIR...
POW!
BZZZZAAAAAT!
POW!
BLOWOUT!
LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT, PRINCESS--
SCREEEEE
KA-BLAMM!
--THINGS ARE MOVIN' INTO HIGH GEAR FAST!
WELL, THIS OLD COSSACK AIN'T GOIN' DOWN--

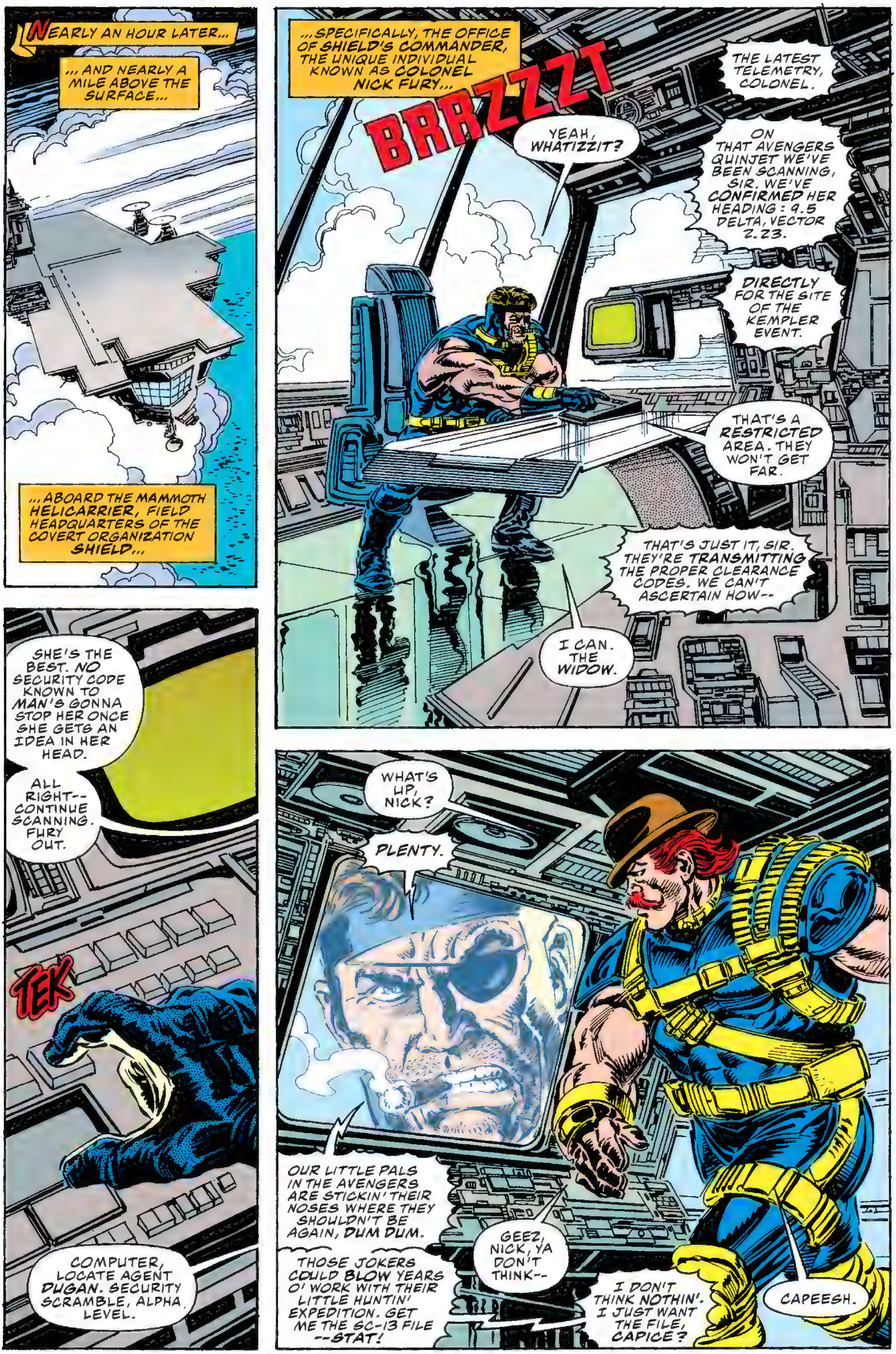

--EASYYARGHHH!
FA-SHAMM!
AND IN THE SUDDEN STILLNESS...
...COMES THE HARD, CLIPPED SOUND OF HEAVY BOOTS ON THE WET PAVEMENT...
--LATERRRR--
...SLOWLY, METHODICALLY APPROACHING THE PRONE RUSSIAN...
Y-YOU?
I--I KNEW YOU'D SHOW UP SOONER OR--
OF COURSE I WOULD, CRETIN...
...FOR THERE IS MUCH YOU MUST TELL ME.

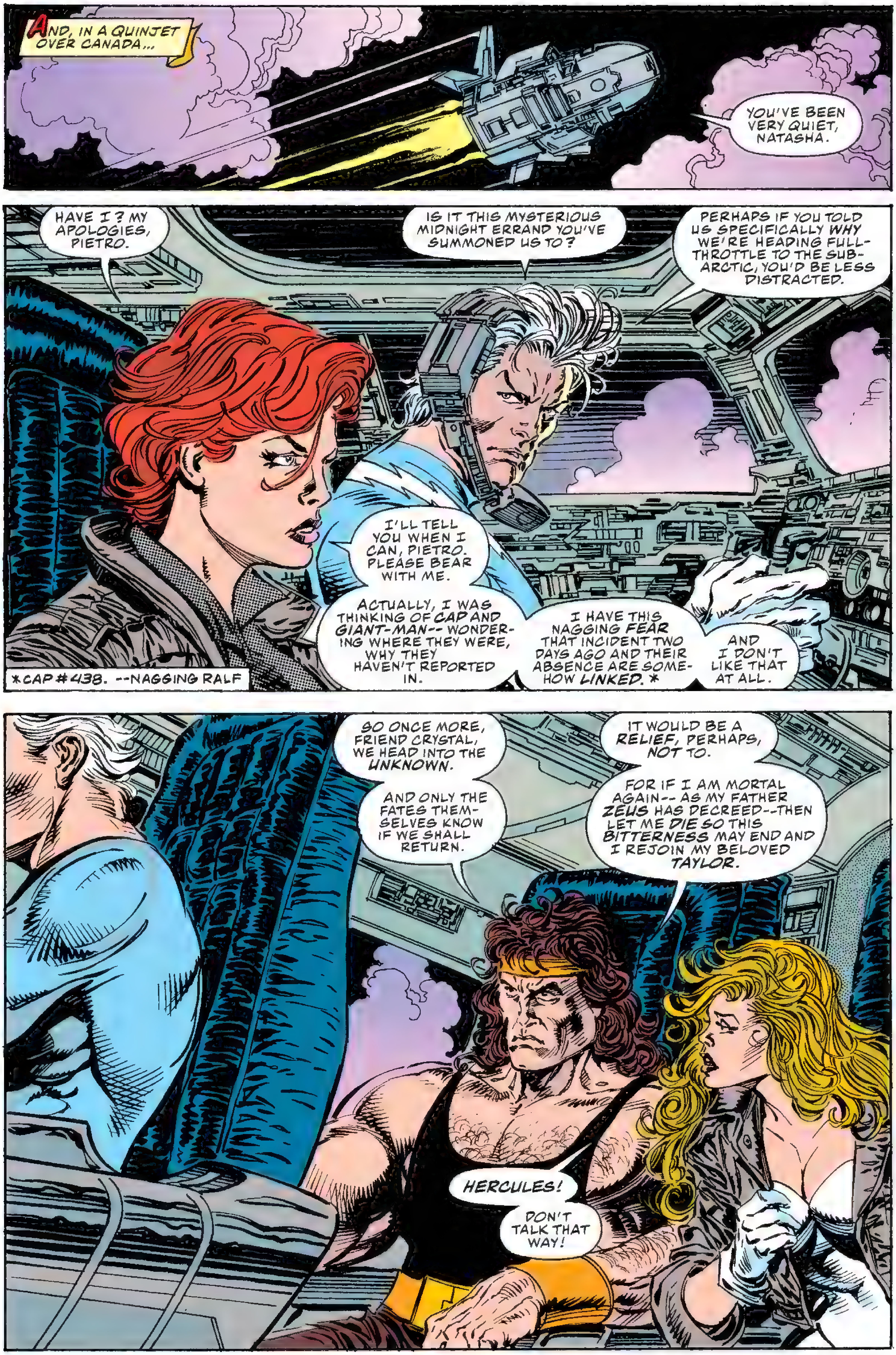

MANHATTAN'S UPPER EAST SIDE.
THE RECENTLY RECONSTRUCTED AVENGERS MANSION.
YOU KNOW, I'M NOT UP TO SPEED ON TERRAN CUSTOMS YET-- BUT AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING, LIKE, MORE EXCITING THINGS ON A SATURDAY NIGHT?
DON'T GET ME WRONG-- EXAMINING A MYSTERIOUS TRANS-TEMPORAL DOOR IS, LIKE, A REAL KICK AN' ALL--
--BUT CAN'T WE GO OUT? Y'KNOW, DANCING? YOU TWO DO KNOW HOW TO DANCE, DON'T YOU?
OR HOWZABOUT SOME TRENDY RESTAURANT IN SOHO? PEOPLE MAGAZINE SAYS THAT'S WHERE ALL THE INCREDIBLY HIP PEOPLE HANG OUT.
WOULDN'T IT BE DOPE TO GET OUR PICTURES IN PEO--
DEATHCRY, PLEASE!
CRYSTAL AND I ARE TAKING SOME EXTREMELY DELICATE READINGS HERE, AND YOUR PRATTLE ISN'T HELPING MATTERS!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, PIETRO.
YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT, NO SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD WANT TO SPEND TIME WITH A COUPLE OF OLD FOGIES LIKE YOU AND ME.
Hmmm-- THE SCANNER'S PICKING UP SOMETHING--

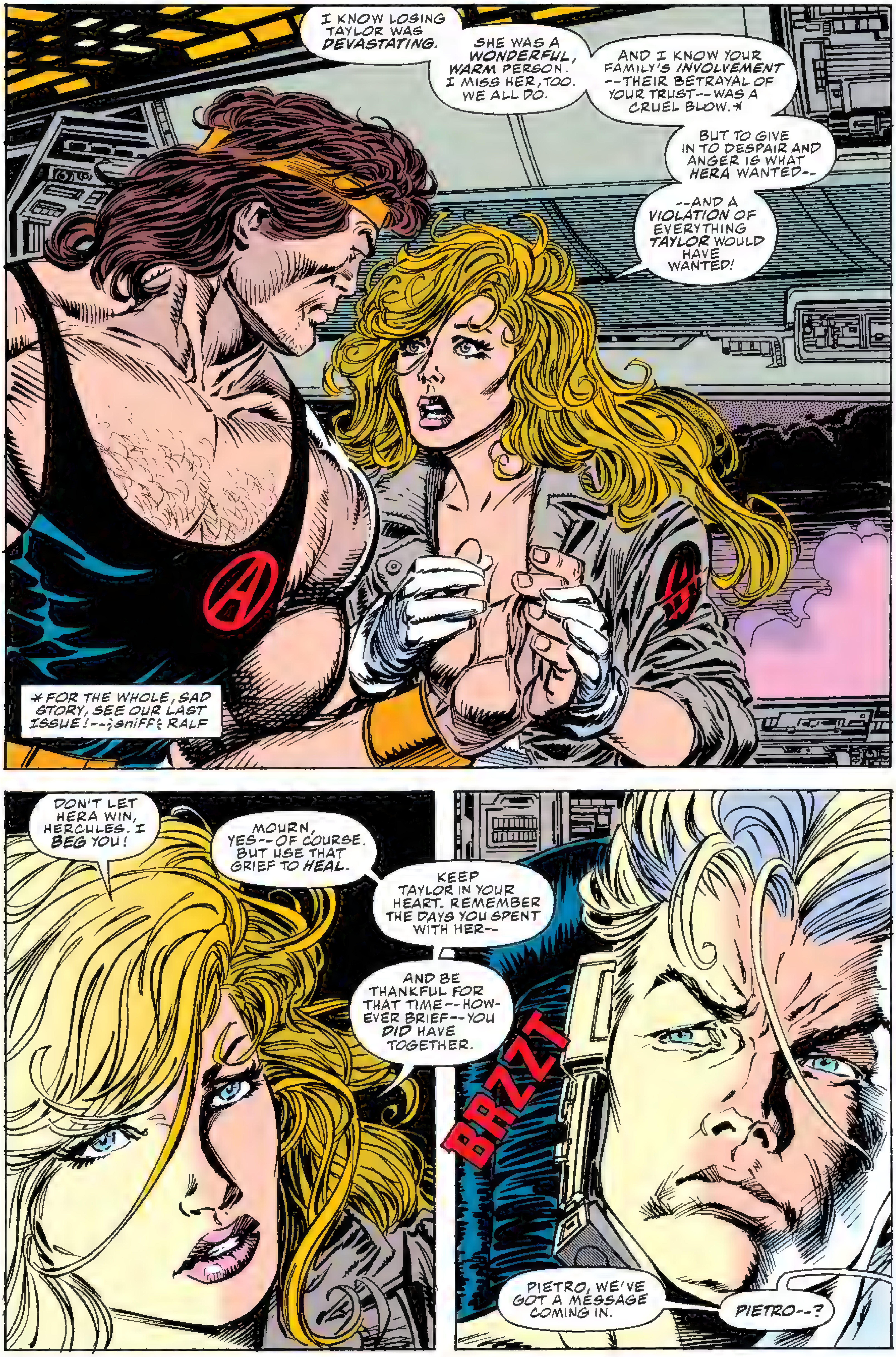

AGON'S BLOOD!
SOME SORT OF FLAME--?!
FA-WHOOSHH!
ISSUING FROM THE DOOR! DEATHCRY--GET BACK!

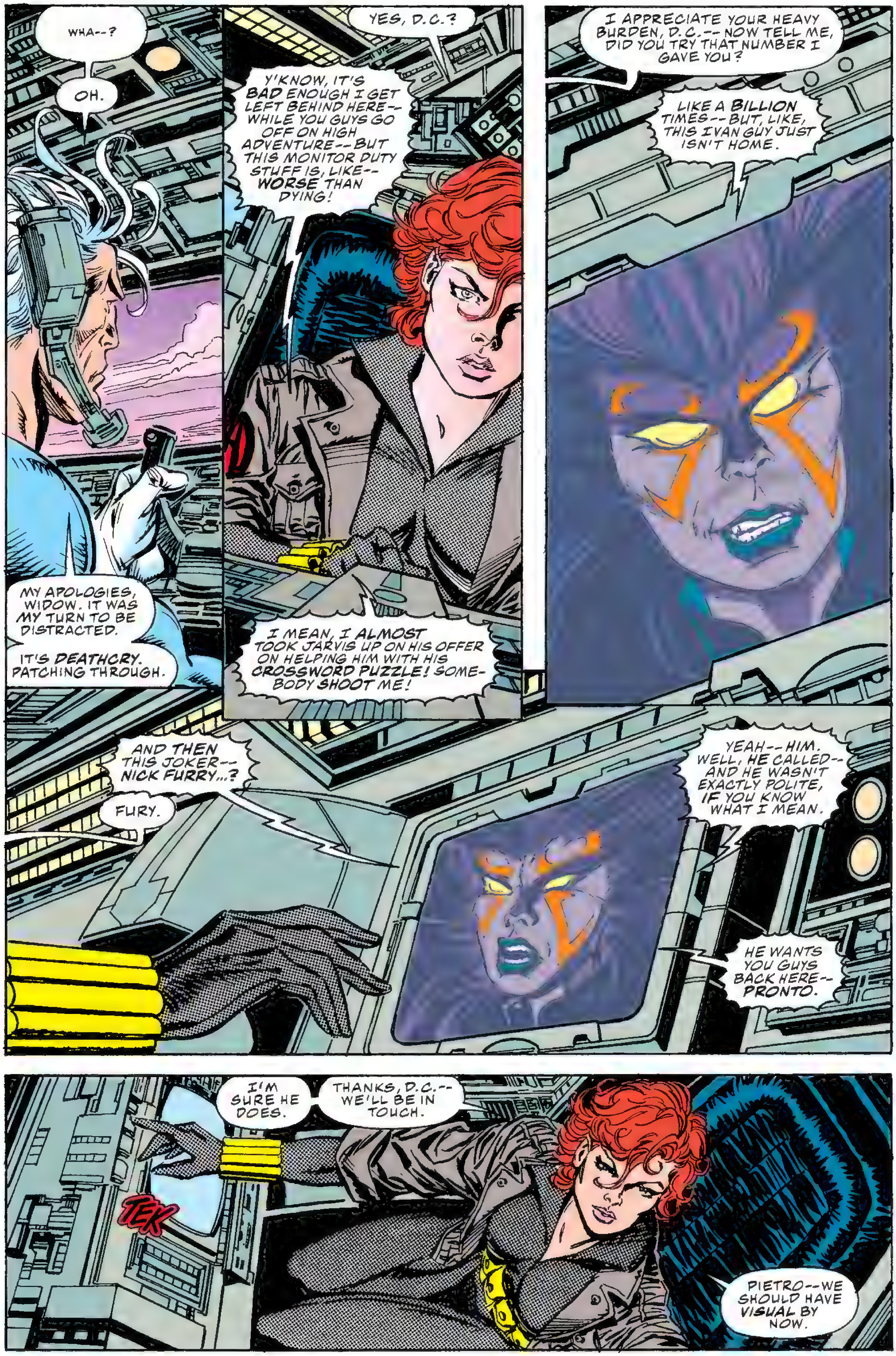

FWA-WOOMPH!
AIIEEE!
OH, GOD!
SHE'S *AFLAME*--!
HAVE TO GET HER OUT OF HARM'S WAY!
WHOOSH
AND I'LL USE MY *ELEMENTAL* POWERS TO *SNUFF* THE FLAME.
PIETRO, IS SHE--?!
I DON'T KNOW.
TAKE HER, CRYSTAL-- WHILE I FIND A BLANKET.

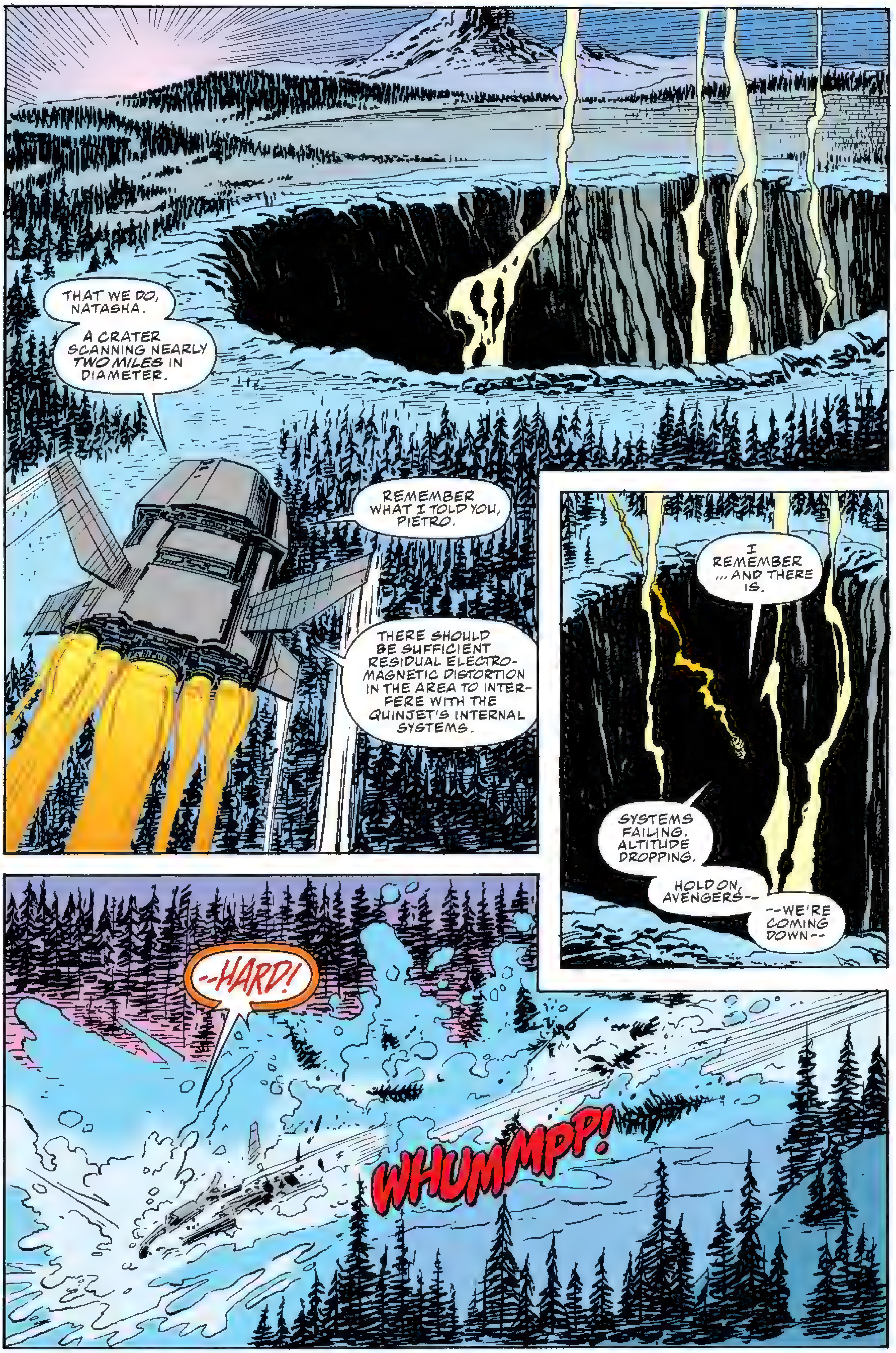

PIETRO--!
I KNOW THIS *SOUNDS* INCREDIBLE, BUT *LOOK*--!
D.C.'S NOT *BURNED!*
WHAT?!
A-ANYONE GET THE NUMBER O' THAT TRUCK?
THANK RANDAK YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
WHATEVER THAT *FLARE* WAS, IT VANISHED AS IF IT HAD NEVER HAPPENED!
WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN *EXACTLY* WHAT HAPPENED, CRYSTAL. SOME SORT OF *TEMPORAL FLUX* EMANATING FROM THAT DAMNABLE DOOR!
THIS IS THE WIDOW. ALL AVENGERS REPORT TO HANGAR DECK 10 FOR RECON MISSION.
BUT IN THE MEANTIME--
--WHAT SAY WE GET DEATHCRY UP TO THE INFIRMARY AND HEAD OUT?
I *TOLD* YOU WE SHOULDA GONE DANCING.
AND, IN THE DARKNESS...
TAP TAP TAP
...SOMETHING FROM THE OTHER SIDE... CALLS OUT.

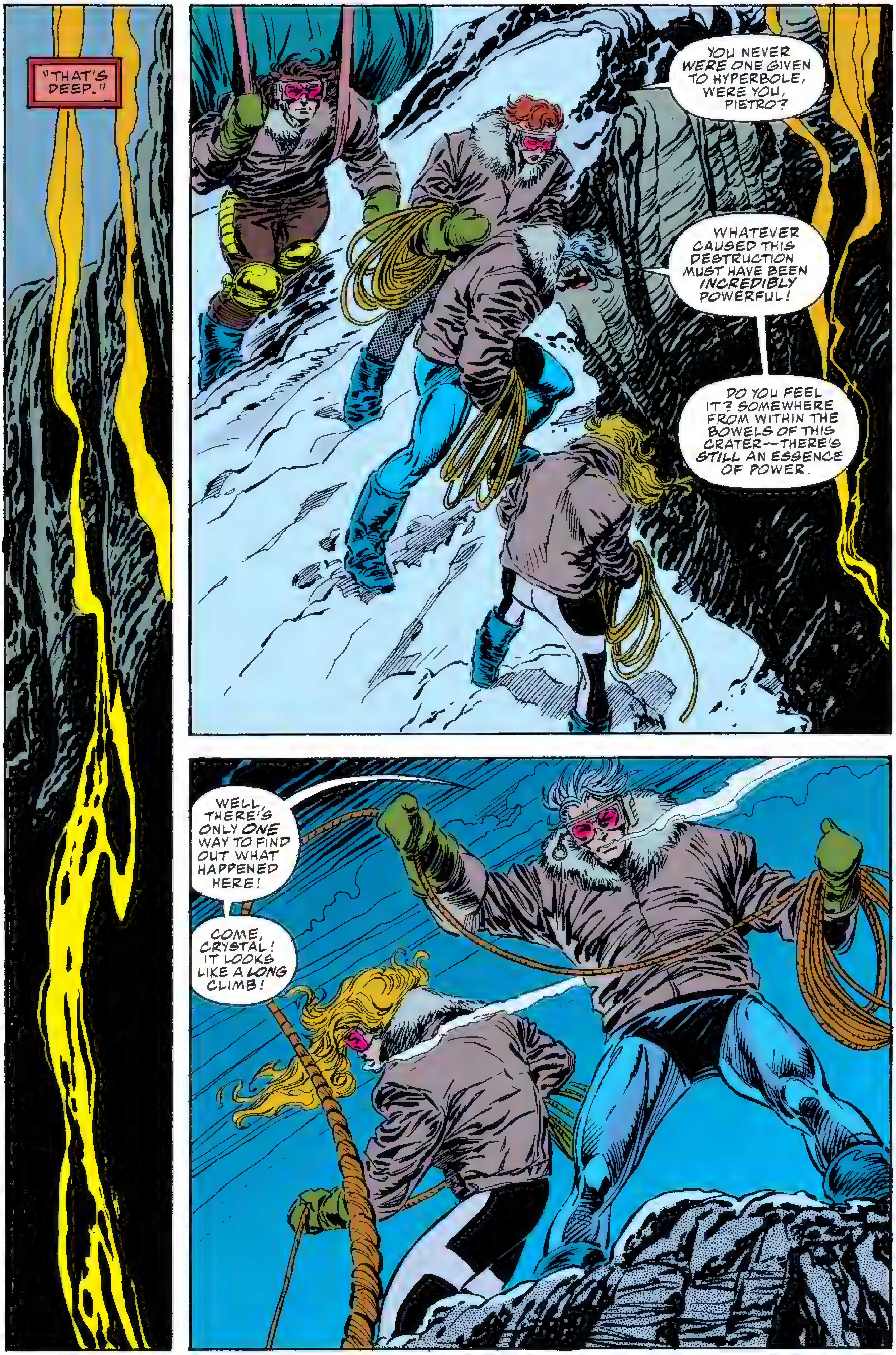

NEARLY AN HOUR LATER...
...AND NEARLY A MILE ABOVE THE SURFACE...
...ABOARD THE MAMMOTH HELICARRIER, FIELD HEADQUARTERS OF THE COVERT ORGANIZATION SHIELD...
...SPECIFICALLY, THE OFFICE OF SHIELD'S COMMANDER, THE UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL KNOWN AS COLONEL NICK FURY...
BRRZZZZT
YEAH, WHATIZZIT?
THE LATEST TELEMETRY, COLONEL.
ON THAT AVENGERS QUINJET WE'VE BEEN SCANNING, SIR. WE'VE CONFIRMED HER HEADING: 9.5 DELTA, VECTOR 2.23.
DIRECTLY FOR THE SITE OF THE KEMPLER EVENT.
THAT'S A RESTRICTED AREA. THEY WON'T GET FAR.
THAT'S JUST IT, SIR. THEY'RE TRANSMITTING THE PROPER CLEARANCE CODES. WE CAN'T ASCERTAIN HOW--
I CAN. THE WIDOW.
SHE'S THE BEST. NO SECURITY CODE KNOWN TO MAN'S GONNA STOP HER ONCE SHE GETS AN IDEA IN HER HEAD.
ALL RIGHT-- CONTINUE SCANNING. FURY OUT.
TEK
COMPUTER, LOCATE AGENT DUGAN. SECURITY SCRAMBLE, ALPHA LEVEL.
WHAT'S UP, NICK?
PLENTY.
OUR LITTLE PALS IN THE AVENGERS ARE STICKIN' THEIR NOSES WHERE THEY SHOULDN'T BE AGAIN, DUM DUM.
THOSE JOKERS COULD BLOW YEARS O' WORK WITH THEIR LITTLE HUNTIN' EXPEDITION. GET ME THE SC-13 FILE --STAT!
GEEZ, NICK, YA DON'T THINK--
I DON'T THINK NOTHIN'. I JUST WANT THE FILE, CAPICE?
CAPEESH.

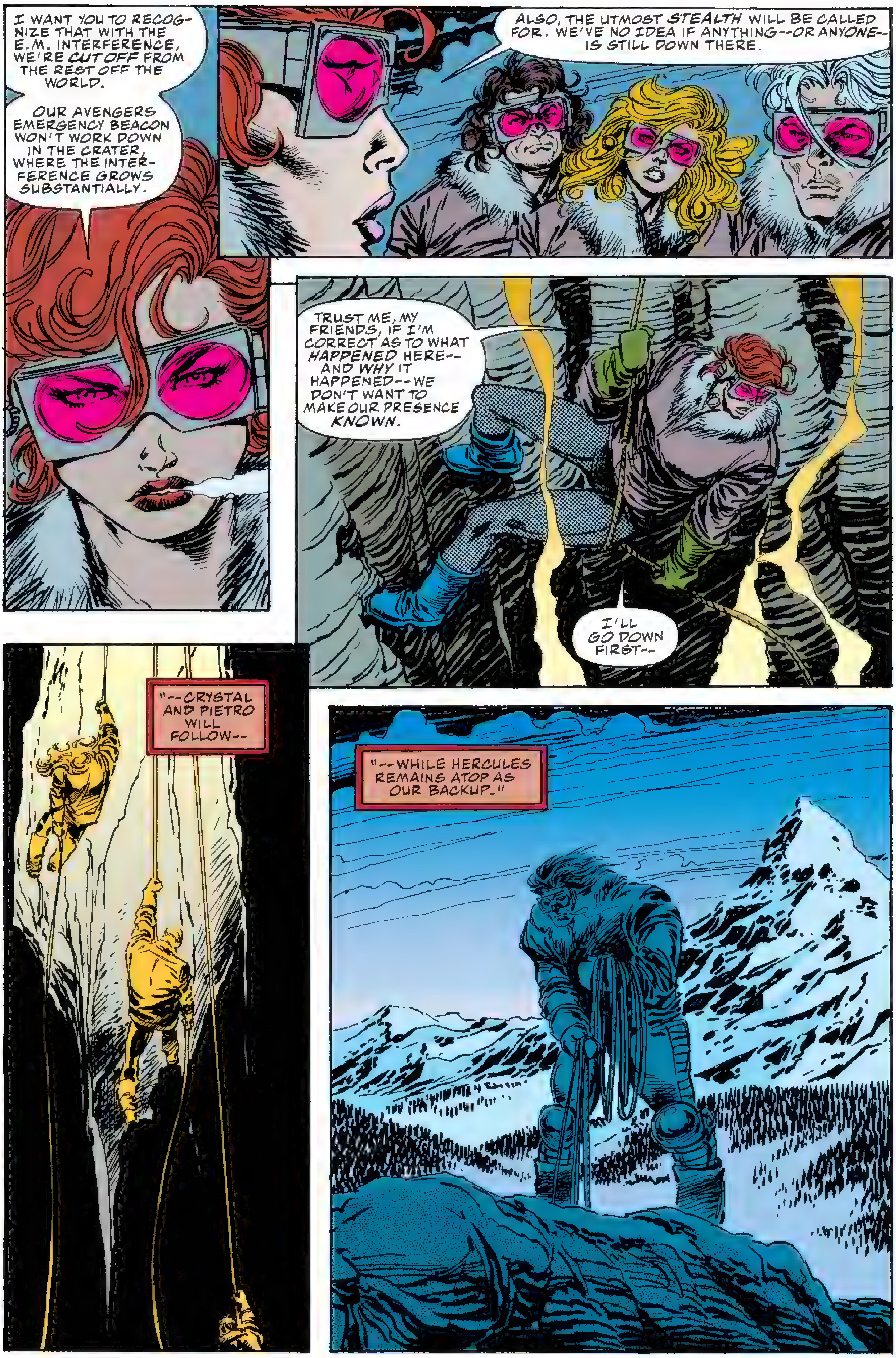

AND, IN A QUINJET OVER CANADA...
YOU'VE BEEN VERY QUIET, NATASHA.
HAVE I? MY APOLOGIES, PIETRO.
IS IT THIS MYSTERIOUS MIDNIGHT ERRAND YOU'VE SUMMONED US TO?
PERHAPS IF YOU TOLD US SPECIFICALLY WHY WE'RE HEADING FULL-THROTTLE TO THE SUB-ARCTIC, YOU'D BE LESS DISTRACTED.
I'LL TELL YOU WHEN I CAN, PIETRO. PLEASE BEAR WITH ME.
ACTUALLY, I WAS THINKING OF CAP AND GIANT-MAN-- WONDERING WHERE THEY WERE, WHY THEY HAVEN'T REPORTED IN.
I HAVE THIS NAGGING FEAR THAT INCIDENT TWO DAYS AGO AND THEIR ABSENCE ARE SOMEHOW LINKED. *
AND I DON'T LIKE THAT AT ALL.
*CAP #438. --NAGGING RALF
SO ONCE MORE, FRIEND CRYSTAL, WE HEAD INTO THE UNKNOWN.
AND ONLY THE FATES THEMSELVES KNOW IF WE SHALL RETURN.
IT WOULD BE A RELIEF, PERHAPS, NOT TO.
FOR IF I AM MORTAL AGAIN-- AS MY FATHER ZEUS HAS DECREED--THEN LET ME DIE SO THIS BITTERNESS MAY END AND I REJOIN MY BELOVED TAYLOR.
HERCULES!
DON'T TALK THAT WAY!

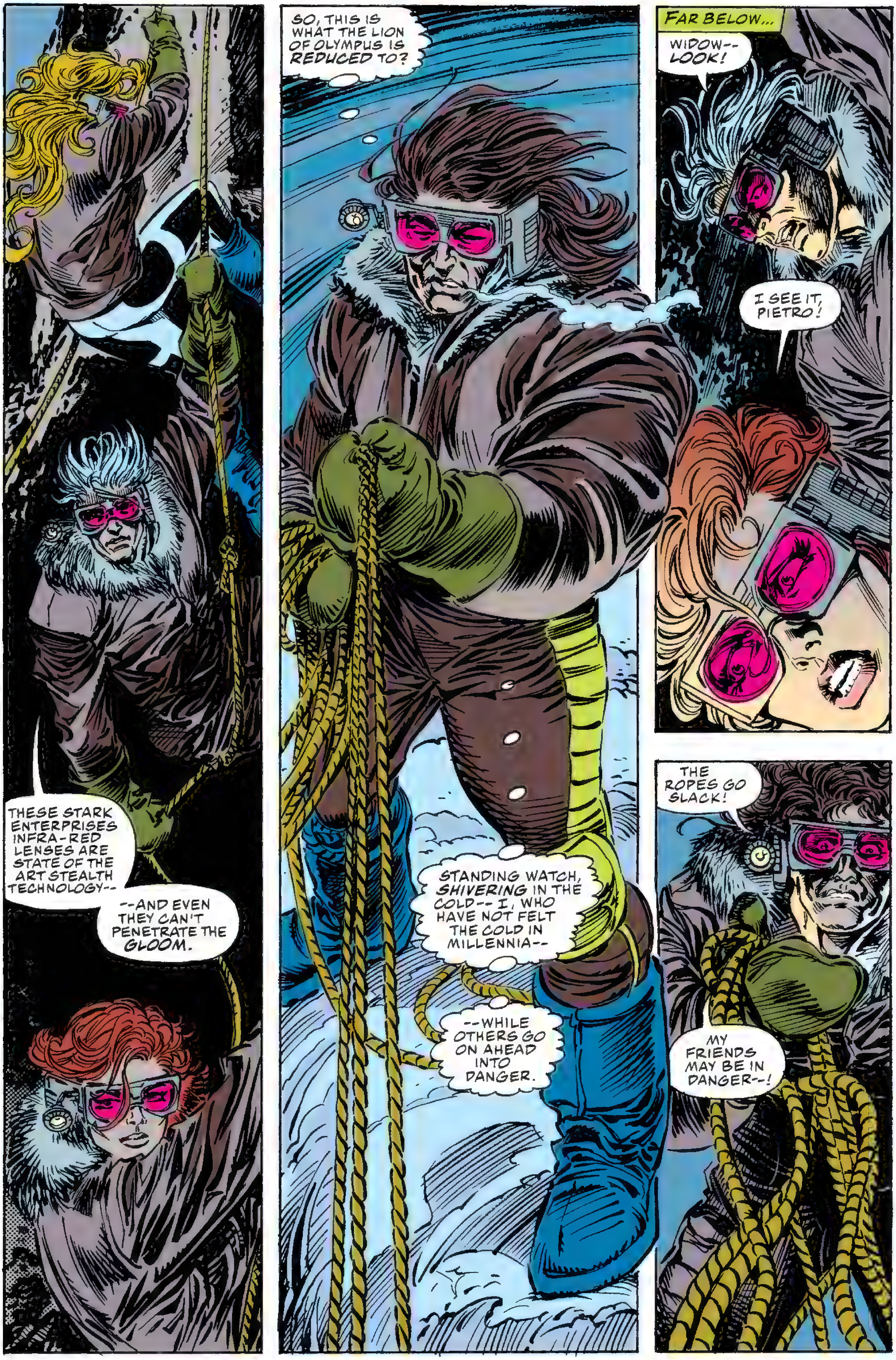

I KNOW LOSING TAYLOR WAS *DEVASTATING*.
SHE WAS A *WONDERFUL*, *WARM* PERSON. I MISS HER, TOO. WE ALL DO.
AND I KNOW YOUR FAMILY'S *INVOLVEMENT* --THEIR BETRAYAL OF YOUR TRUST--WAS A CRUEL BLOW.*
BUT TO GIVE IN TO DESPAIR AND ANGER IS WHAT *HERA* WANTED--
--AND A *VIOLATION* OF EVERYTHING *TAYLOR* WOULD HAVE WANTED!
*FOR THE WHOLE, SAD STORY, SEE OUR LAST ISSUE!--;sniff; RALF
DON'T LET HERA WIN, HERCULES. I *BEG* YOU!
MOURN, YES--OF COURSE. BUT USE THAT GRIEF TO *HEAL*.
KEEP TAYLOR IN YOUR HEART. REMEMBER THE DAYS YOU SPENT WITH HER--
AND BE THANKFUL FOR THAT TIME--HOWEVER BRIEF--YOU *DID* HAVE TOGETHER.
BRZZT
PIETRO, WE'VE GOT A MESSAGE COMING IN.
PIETRO--?

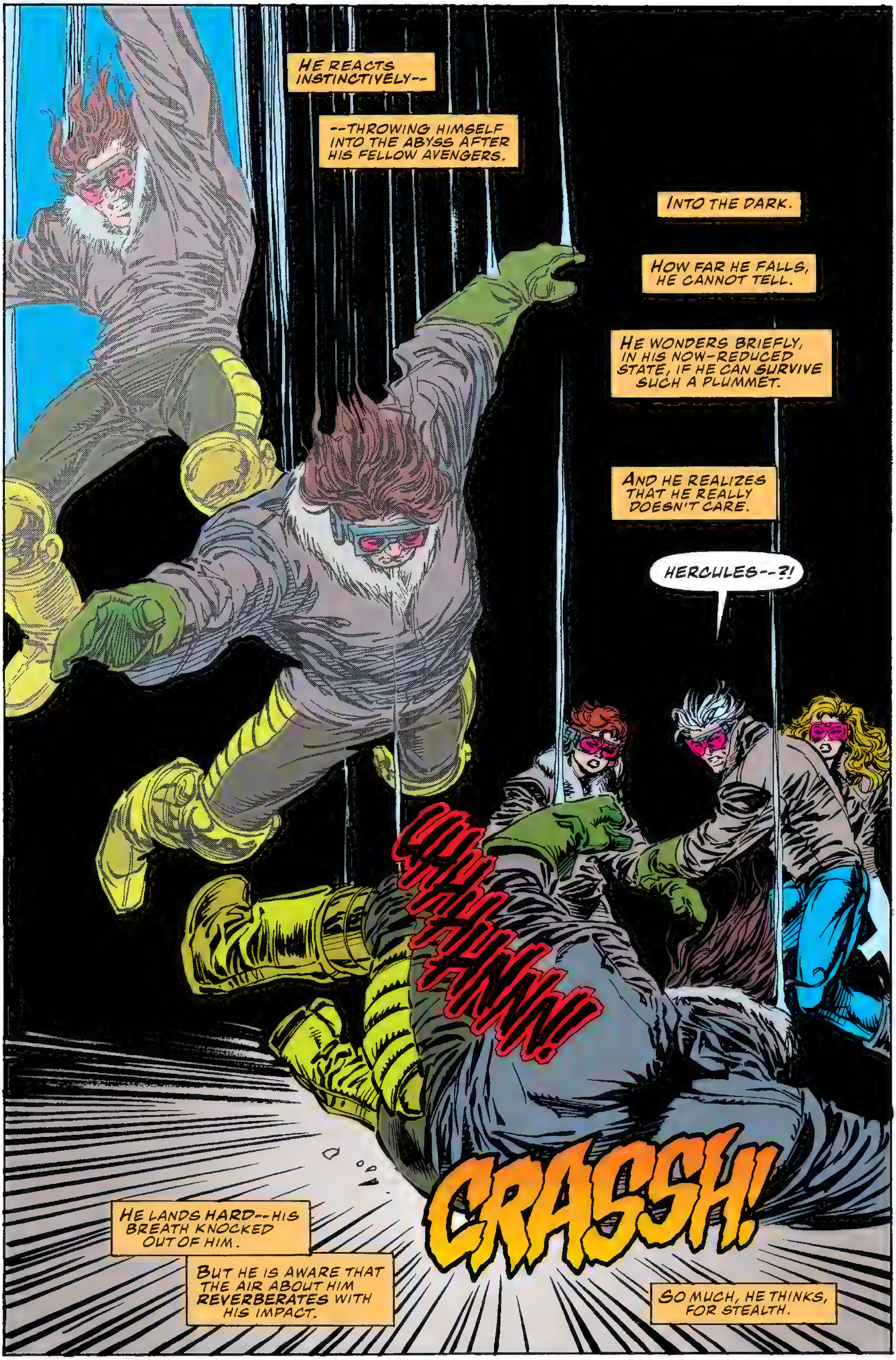

WHA--?
OH.
YES, D.C.?
Y'KNOW, IT'S BAD ENOUGH I GET LEFT BEHIND HERE--WHILE YOU GUYS GO OFF ON HIGH ADVENTURE--BUT THIS MONITOR DUTY STUFF IS, LIKE--WORSE THAN DYING!
I APPRECIATE YOUR HEAVY BURDEN, D.C.--NOW TELL ME, DID YOU TRY THAT NUMBER I GAVE YOU?
LIKE A BILLION TIMES--BUT, LIKE, THIS IVAN GUY JUST ISN'T HOME.
MY APOLOGIES, WIDOW. IT WAS MY TURN TO BE DISTRACTED.
IT'S DEATHCRY. PATCHING THROUGH.
I MEAN, I ALMOST TOOK JARVIS UP ON HIS OFFER ON HELPING HIM WITH HIS CROSSWORD PUZZLE! SOMEBODY SHOOT ME!
AND THEN THIS JOKER--NICK FURRY...?
FURY.
YEAH--HIM. WELL, HE CALLED--AND HE WASN'T EXACTLY POLITE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
HE WANTS YOU GUYS BACK HERE--PRONTO.
I'M SURE HE DOES.
THANKS, D.C.--WE'LL BE IN TOUCH.
TEK
PIETRO--WE SHOULD HAVE VISUAL BY NOW.

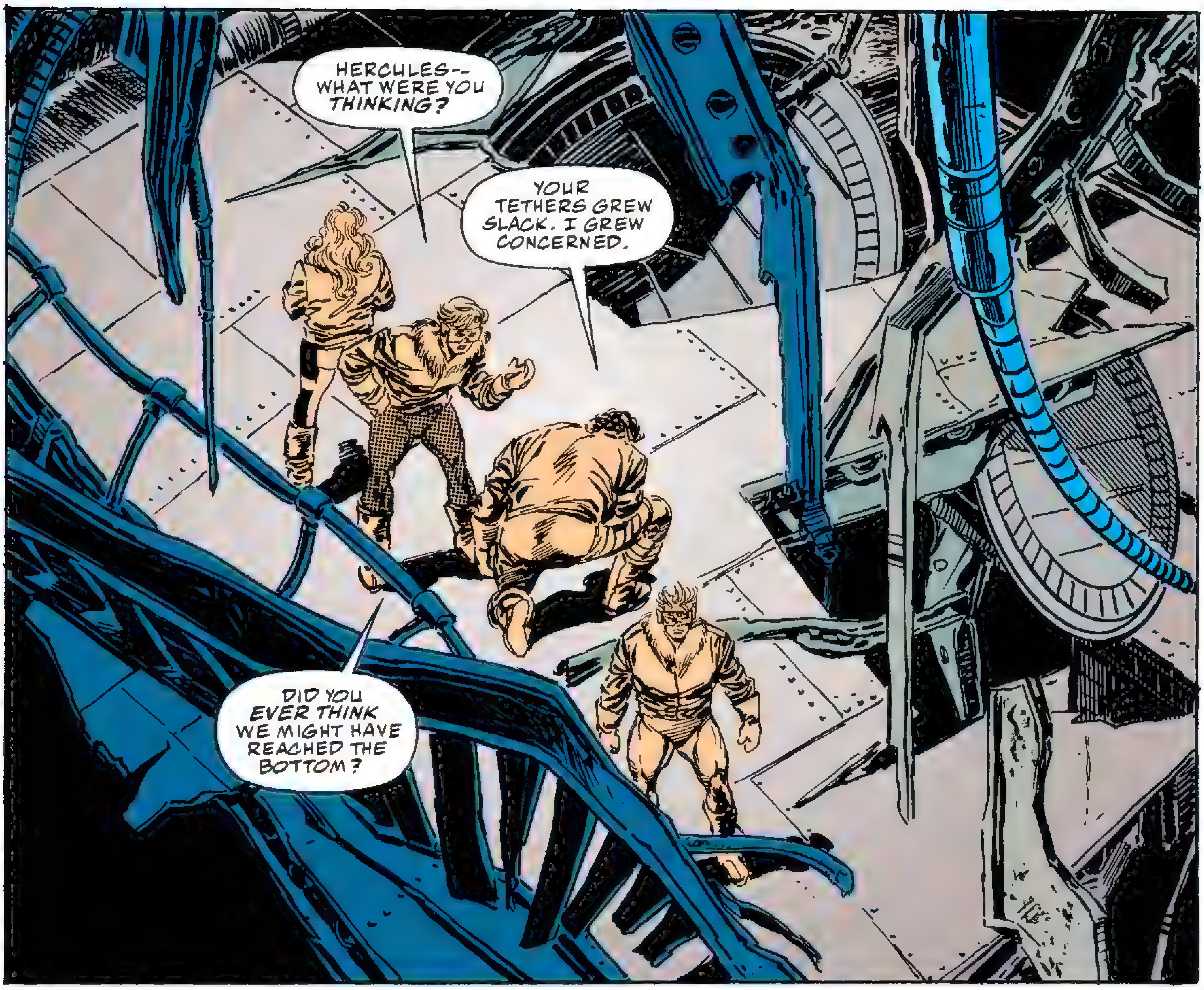

THAT WE DO, NATASHA.
A CRATER SCANNING NEARLY *TWO MILES* IN DIAMETER.
REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU, PIETRO.
THERE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT RESIDUAL ELECTRO-MAGNETIC DISTORTION IN THE AREA TO INTERFERE WITH THE QUINJET'S INTERNAL SYSTEMS.
I REMEMBER ...AND THERE IS.
SYSTEMS FAILING. ALTITUDE DROPPING.
HOLD ON, AVENGERS--
--WE'RE COMING DOWN--
--HARD!
WHUMMPP!

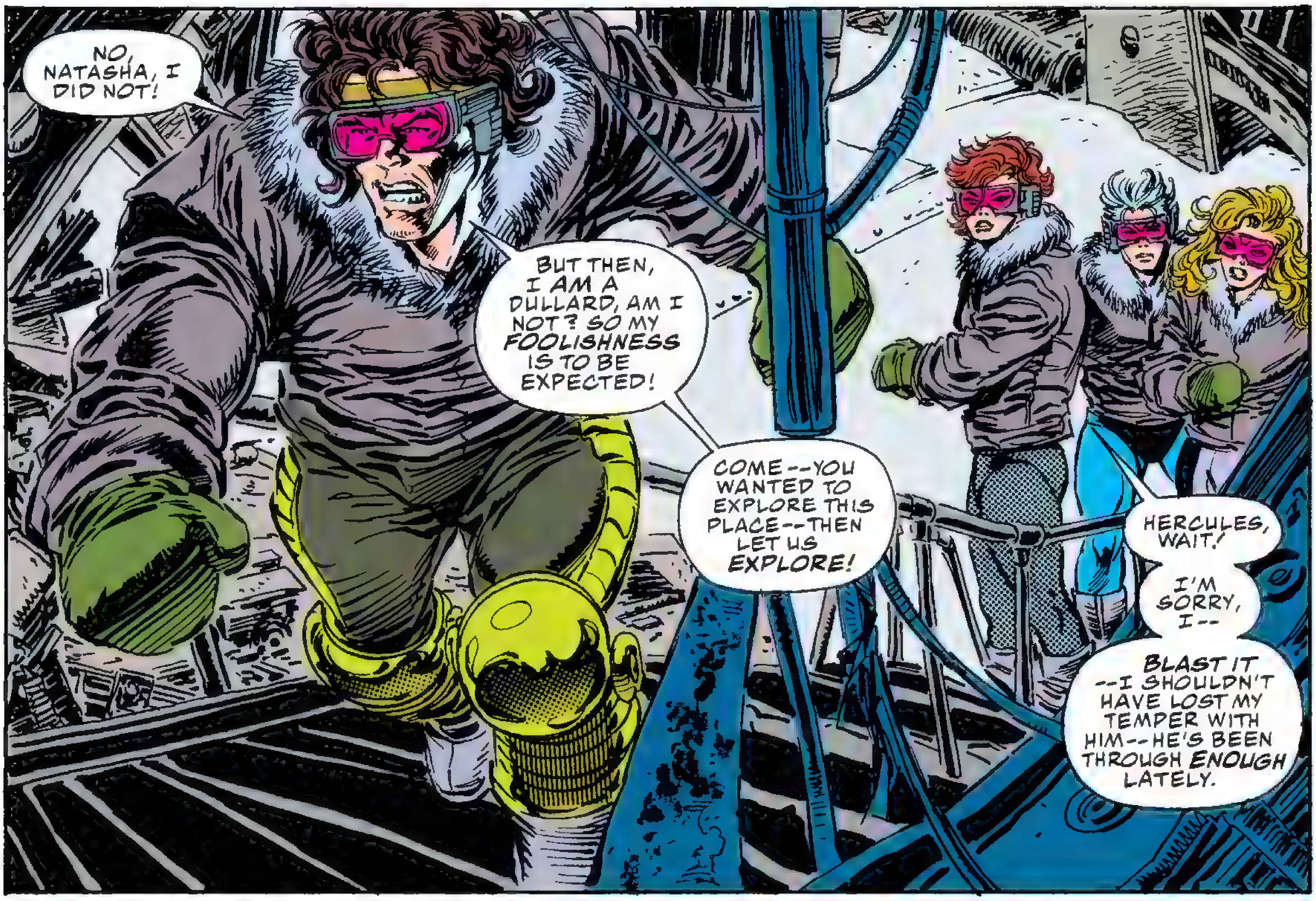

"THAT'S DEEP."
YOU NEVER *WERE* ONE GIVEN TO HYPERBOLE, WERE YOU, PIETRO?
WHATEVER CAUSED THIS DESTRUCTION MUST HAVE BEEN *INCREDIBLY* POWERFUL!
DO YOU FEEL IT? SOMEWHERE FROM WITHIN THE BOWELS OF THIS CRATER--THERE'S *STILL* AN ESSENCE OF POWER.
WELL, THERE'S ONLY *ONE* WAY TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED HERE!
COME, CRYSTAL! IT LOOKS LIKE A *LONG* CLIMB!

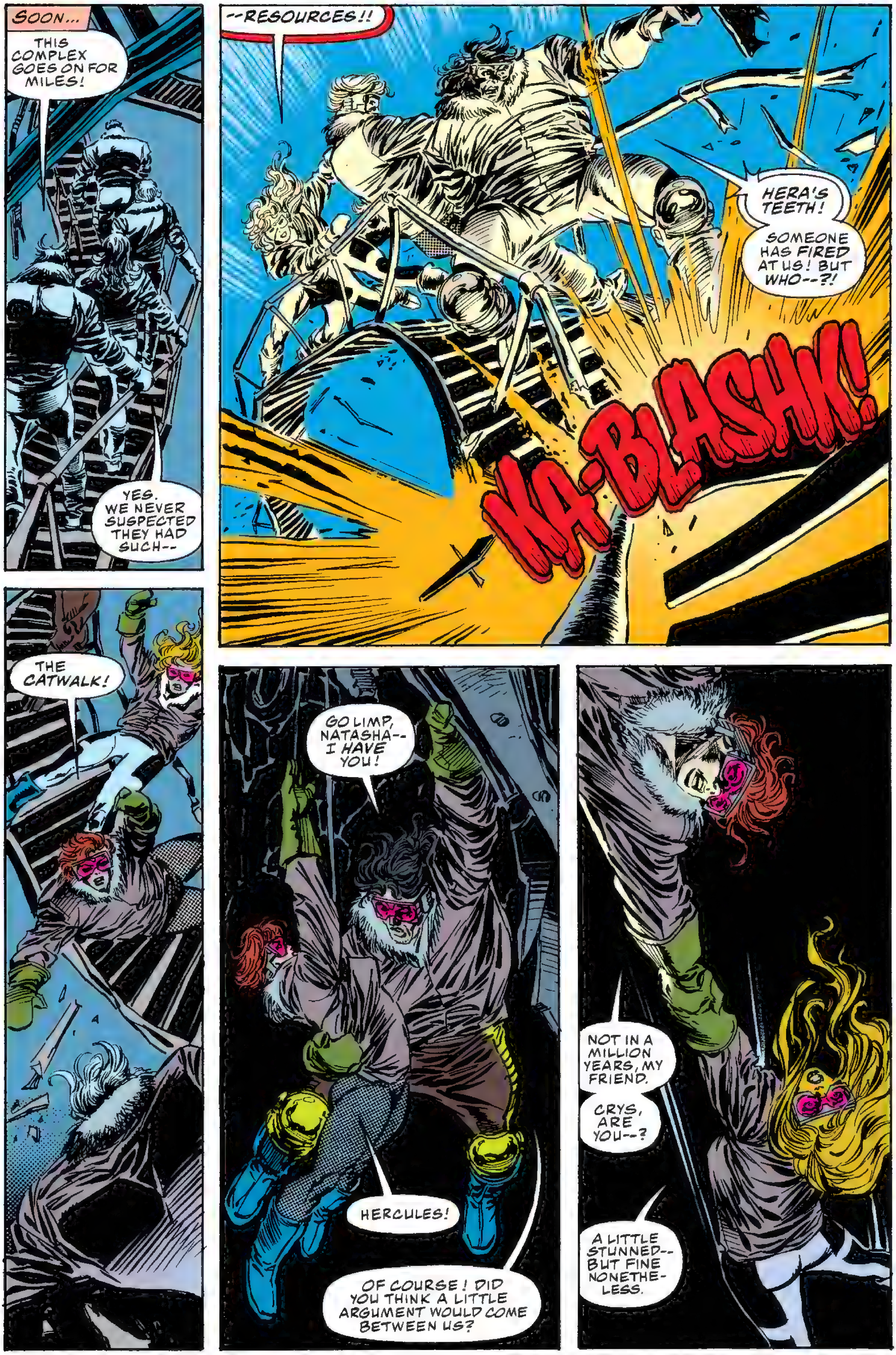

I WANT YOU TO RECOGNIZE THAT WITH THE E.M. INTERFERENCE, WE'RE *CUT OFF* FROM THE REST OFF THE WORLD.
OUR AVENGERS EMERGENCY BEACON WON'T WORK DOWN IN THE CRATER, WHERE THE INTERFERENCE GROWS SUBSTANTIALLY.
ALSO, THE UTMOST *STEALTH* WILL BE CALLED FOR. WE'VE NO IDEA IF ANYTHING--OR *ANYONE*--IS STILL DOWN THERE.
TRUST ME, MY FRIENDS, IF I'M CORRECT AS TO WHAT *HAPPENED* HERE--AND *WHY* IT HAPPENED--WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE OUR PRESENCE *KNOWN*.
I'LL GO DOWN FIRST--
"--CRYSTAL AND PIETRO WILL FOLLOW--
"--WHILE HERCULES REMAINS ATOP AS OUR BACKUP."

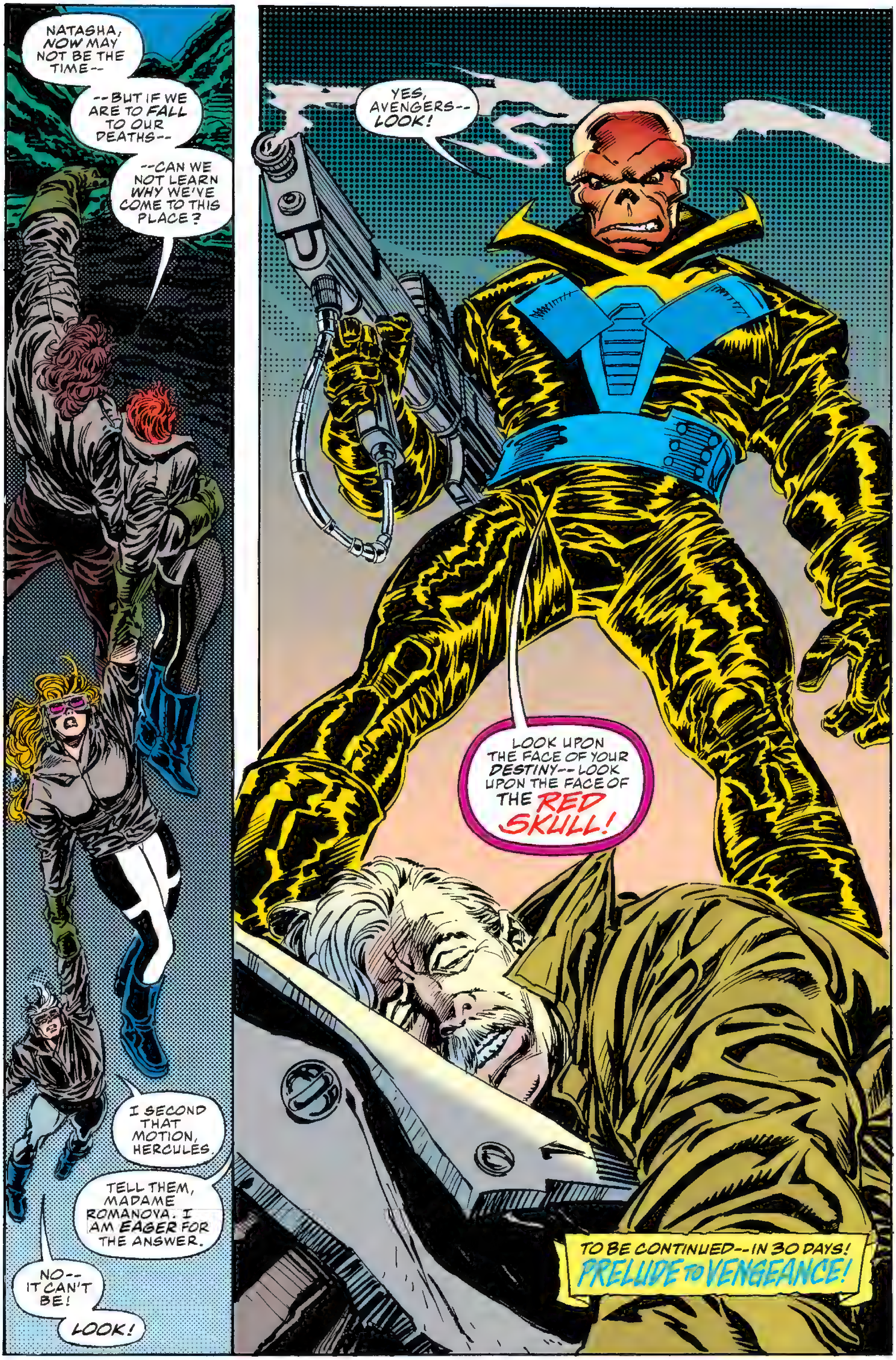

THESE STARK ENTERPRISES INFRA-RED LENSES ARE STATE OF THE ART STEALTH TECHNOLOGY--
--AND EVEN THEY CAN'T PENETRATE THE *GLOOM*.
SO, THIS IS WHAT THE LION OF OLYMPUS IS *REDUCED* TO?
STANDING WATCH, *SHIVERING* IN THE COLD-- I, WHO HAVE NOT FELT THE COLD IN MILLENNIA--
--WHILE OTHERS GO ON AHEAD INTO DANGER.
FAR BELOW...
WIDOW-- *LOOK!*
I SEE IT, PIETRO!
THE ROPES GO SLACK!
MY FRIENDS MAY BE IN DANGER--!


HE REACTS INSTINCTIVELY--
--THROWING HIMSELF INTO THE ABYSS AFTER HIS FELLOW AVENGERS.
INTO THE DARK.
HOW FAR HE FALLS, HE CANNOT TELL.
HE WONDERS BRIEFLY, IN HIS NOW-REDUCED STATE, IF HE CAN SURVIVE SUCH A PLUMMET.
AND HE REALIZES THAT HE REALLY DOESN'T CARE.
HERCULES--?!
UHHHNNN!
CRASSH!
HE LANDS HARD--HIS BREATH KNOCKED OUT OF HIM.
BUT HE IS AWARE THAT THE AIR ABOUT HIM REVERBERATES WITH HIS IMPACT.
SO MUCH, HE THINKS, FOR STEALTH.


HERCULES-- WHAT WERE YOU *THINKING?*
YOUR TETHERS GREW SLACK. I GREW CONCERNED.
DID YOU *EVER THINK* WE MIGHT HAVE REACHED THE BOTTOM?


NO, NATASHA, I DID NOT!
BUT THEN, *I AM* A DULLARD, AM I NOT? SO MY *FOOLISHNESS* IS TO BE EXPECTED!
COME--YOU WANTED TO EXPLORE THIS PLACE--THEN LET US *EXPLORE!*
HERCULES, WAIT!
I'M SORRY, I--
BLAST IT --I SHOULDN'T HAVE LOST MY TEMPER WITH HIM--HE'S BEEN THROUGH *ENOUGH* LATELY.


SOON...
THIS COMPLEX GOES ON FOR MILES!
YES. WE NEVER SUSPECTED THEY HAD SUCH--
--RESOURCES!!
HERA'S TEETH!
SOMEONE HAS FIRED AT US! BUT WHO--?!
KA-BLASHK!
THE CATWALK!
GO LIMP, NATASHA-- I HAVE YOU!
HERCULES!
OF COURSE! DID YOU THINK A LITTLE ARGUMENT WOULD COME BETWEEN US?
NOT IN A MILLION YEARS, MY FRIEND.
CRYS, ARE YOU--?
A LITTLE STUNNED-- BUT FINE NONETHELESS.


NATASHA, *NOW* MAY NOT BE THE TIME--
--BUT IF WE ARE TO *FALL* TO OUR DEATHS--
--CAN WE NOT LEARN *WHY* WE'VE COME TO THIS PLACE?
I SECOND THAT MOTION, HERCULES.
TELL THEM, MADAME ROMANOVA. I AM *EAGER* FOR THE ANSWER.
NO-- IT CAN'T BE!
LOOK!
YES, AVENGERS-- *LOOK!*
LOOK UPON THE FACE OF YOUR *DESTINY*-- LOOK UPON THE FACE OF THE *RED SKULL!*
TO BE CONTINUED--IN 30 DAYS! *PRELUDE TO VENGEANCE!*

MARVEL COMICS
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
386
MAY '95
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
TAKING A.I.M.
PRELUDE

INFORMED OF A MYSTERIOUS AND DEVASTATING ENERGY FLARE IN THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST BY HER FORMER PARTNER, IVAN BEZUKHOV, THE BLACK WIDOW LED THE MIGHTY AVENGERS-- THE MUTANT QUICKSILVER, HIS WIFE, THE ELEMENTAL CRYSTAL AND THE GODLING HERCULES--ON A MISSION TO DISCOVER THE ORIGIN OF THE CATASTROPHE.
NOW DEEP IN THE HEART OF AN ABANDONED AND DEVASTATED COMPLEX, THE AVENGERS HAVE DISCOVERED--TO THEIR HORROR-- THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES INVESTIGATING THE FLARE.
FOR HERE IN THE DARK--THE RED SKULL WAS WAITING FOR THEM.
SOMETHING VERY VALUABLE WAS STOLEN FROM ME, AVENGERS.
BEFORE YOU DIE IN THIS COLD AND LONELY PLACE, I COMMAND YOU TO TELL ME WHERE IT IS!

STAN LEE PRESENTS
THE AVENGERS IN:

SHADOW HUNT

BOB HARRAS and TERRY KAVANAGH
plot
BOB HARRAS
script
ANGEL MEDINA
guest penciler
SCOTT KOBLISH
guest inker
JOHN KALISZ
colorist
OAKLEY / NJQ
letterers
RALPH MACCHIO
editor
MARK GRUENWALD
editor in chief

[redacted]

YOU DO NOT ANSWER.
LIKE THIS FOOLISH OLD *BOLSHEVIK*, YOU SEEK TO *THWART* ME.
LIKE HIM, YOU WILL FIND THAT *IMPOSSIBLE*.
AND FOR *THAT*, SKULL--
BRRZZ
"--THE WIDOW WILL MAKE YOU *PAY!*"
AH. YOUR VAUNTED WIDOW'S STING, MADAME ROMANOVA.
ZZZT!
A *PRETTY* LITTLE TOY--
IVAN! YOU'VE HURT IVAN!
BRZZAAAT!
--BUT IN THE END--
RUMMBLLE
--INEFFECTUAL?

A WELL AIMED BLOW, FAIR *NATASHA!*
THE VILLAIN IS *UNDONE--*
UHNNN!
--AS--
--*APPARENTLY*--
--AM I!
B-BY OLYMPUS, CARRYING YOU ALL UP THE SHAFT WAS NEARLY *MORE* THAN I COULD BEAR.
GIVE ME YOUR HAND, *PIETRO.*
WE'VE MADE IT. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT.
TRULY, THE PRINCE OF POWER HAS COME TO A *SAD* END.
NO, CRYSTAL--
--NOT WHILE THE *RED SKULL*--
--LIVES!?
HE'S GONE.
AS IF HE WERE NEVER HERE.

NATASHA, SINCE THE DAY I JOINED THE AVENGERS I'VE *NEVER* DOUBTED YOUR LEADERSHIP.
WE CAME TO THIS PLACE AT *YOUR* REQUEST. NO QUESTIONS ASKED.
BUT IN LIGHT OF OUR LITTLE ENCOUNTER, I THINK WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW--
--JUST *WHAT* IN RANDAK'S NAME IS GOING ON?
CRYSTAL, I WOULD TELL YOU IF I COULD.
BUT THE SKULL'S PRESENCE HERE MERELY *CONFIRMS* THAT WE HAVE TO FIND OUT *WHAT* CAUSED THIS DESTRUCTION--
--AND *WHO* BUILT THIS COMPLEX IN THE FIRST PLACE.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE TO MAKE SURE IVAN IS ALL RIGHT.
NATASHA--IT IS NOT LIKE YOU TO KEEP SECRETS FROM YOUR FELLOW AVENGERS!
I HAVE HEARD TELL OF THIS RED SKULL FROM CAPTAIN AMERICA. HE IS EVIL *INCARNATE*--
--AND I TELL YOU, MY FRIENDS, HE IS OUT THERE IN THE SHADOWS--IN THE COLD--*WATCHING* US AND WE DO NOT EVEN KNOW *WHY*.
EASY, *HERCULES*.
WE'RE ALL *AWARE* OF OUR SITUATION.

FORGIVE HIM, NATASHA.
BUT TAYLOR'S DEATH AND HIS FATHER'S CURSE ARE STILL TOO FRESH. THE WOUNDS HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO HEAL.
WELL, HE'S RIGHT THAT IT'S *COLD* DOWN HERE, AND IVAN NEEDS WARMTH QUICKLY.
BUT--
--I CAN ONLY SUMMON A FEW FLICKERING FLAMES.
THE SAME AMBIENT ENERGY THAT BROUGHT DOWN OUR QUINJET IS INTERFERING WITH MY ELEMENTAL POWERS.
THERE IS A MEDICAL KIT ON THE QUINJET.
IF IVAN CANNOT YET BE MOVED, WE'LL NEED THAT KIT DOWN HERE.
IT IS A *LONG* CLIMB, MY FRIEND.
TAKE CARE.
AND YOU AS WELL, AVENGERS. AND YOU AS WELL.

SOMEWHERE IN THE CARIBBEAN--
CENTRAL--I'VE ENTERED THE SECURITY ZONE.
STEALTH FIELDS ARE OPERATING AT MAXIMUM LEVELS. I HAVE NOT BEEN DETECTED.
PROCEEDING DOWN TO THE RETRIEVAL AREA. KEMPLER SCAN INDICATES A *POWERFUL* PULSE WAVE OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE.
IF THE CONTAINMENT FIELDS HOLD--WE'LL HAVE THE SPECIMEN WE NEED, CENTRAL.
IF WE DON'T, WE'LL HAVE A REPEAT OF THE CANADIAN SITUATION...
...AND WE CAN KISS IT *ALL* GOOD-BYE.

CANADA.
HERCULES..?
eh?
THANK GOD YOU'VE COME--!
THE SKULL'S HELD ME HERE FOR DAYS!
CAPTAIN AMERICA!
WE'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT YOU--AND RIGHTLY SO, IT WOULD APPEAR!
AT LAST-- SUNLIGHT!
I AM AMAZED I SURVIVED THIS FALL--PERHAPS MY FATHER DID NOT REMOVE ALL--
WE'VE SEEN THE SKULL OURSELVES, GOOD CAPTAIN. DOWN DEEP IN THE HEART OF THIS RUINED EDIFICE.
HERE, MY FRIEND--YOU ARE WEAK-- LEAN ON ME.
WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM, HERCULES! WHAT HE PLANS IS-- HORRIBLE.

HIS BASE OF OPERATIONS IS JUST BEYOND THAT ROCKY SPUR.
INDEED? THEN LET US INVESTIGATE.
YOU HAVE TOLD ME *MUCH* OF THIS RED SKULL OVER THE YEARS, CAPTAIN.
SUCH EVIL AS *HIS* CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE.
HERCULES--
--WAIT FOR--
--ME.
ARRGGH!
SZZAAK!
FOOL.
DOESN'T EVEN KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS OLD FRIEND--
--AND A HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION.
AND *YOU* WERE THE STRONGEST OF THEM, HERCULES. IT IS TO LAUGH.

DID ANYONE *HEAR* THAT?
IT SOUNDED LIKE A CRY OF PAIN--BUT SO DISTANT--SO *FAINT.*
YOUR INHUMAN HEARING IS MORE *ACUTE* THAN OURS, CRYSTAL.
BUT WHAT YOU HEARD COULD HAVE BEEN A TRICK OF THE WIND IN THE RUINS...
...ALTHOUGH I *DOUBT* IT.
AS DO I.
HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, NATASHA. ONE OF THE MOST FORMIDABLE FOES CAP EVER FACED--
--AND *WE* ARE ISOLATED. MY POWER AND CRYSTAL'S ARE *WEAKENED* DUE TO THE ENERGY THAT *PERMEATES* THIS PLACE.
THE SKULL THINKS WE HAVE *TAKEN* SOMETHING VERY VALUABLE FROM HIM AND WE HAVE *NO* IDEA WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT.
ALL IN ALL, NOT THE *BEST* POSITION TO FIND ONESELF.
TH-THE BOY'S RIGHT!
GET OUT OF HERE--*NOW!* DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME--JUST GO!
WE'D SOONER *DIE* THAN GIVE UP ON A FRIEND, MR. BEZUKHOV.
I'M WORRIED. THAT *WAS* A SCREAM I HEARD...AND HERCULES HAS BEEN GONE TOO LONG.
INDEED HE HAS, AVENGER.
THE *SKULL!* CRYSTAL, WATCH OUT--!

HOW PERCEPTIVE OF YOU.
THWAKK
CRYSTAL!!
UHHNN!
YOU SON OF A---!
YOU DARE SPEAK TO ME IN SUCH A TONE?
PUNNT
Y--YOUR SPEED!? H--HOW--
URRK!
ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE FOR THE MASTER RACE, AVENGER.

TO THINK I AM *FORCED* TO TOUCH YOUR *DEGENERATE* FLESH, GYPSY!
THE *REICH* SHOULD HAVE DESTROYED *ALL* YOUR DISGUSTING RACE WHEN IT HAD THE CHANCE.
STILL--THERE IS SOME SATISFACTION IN THE FACT THAT THE *SON OF MAGNETO* DIES AT *MY* HAND.
UHNNN!
DON'T GET AHEAD OF YOURSELF, SKULL!
NO AVENGER IS DYING TODAY!
WHO?
AH, YES.
POW!
THE RUSSIAN.

WHAT *SORT* OF MAN ARE YOU, GYPSY--
--THAT NEEDS A *WOMAN* TO COME TO HIS RESCUE?
PERHAPS YOU ARE NOT A *TRUE* MAN, AFTER ALL, *eh,* MUTANT?
THINK OF *THAT* AS I CRUSH YOUR WINDPIPE, MAXIMOFF-- AND IMAGINE YOUR FATHER'S TEARS AT THE PASSING OF HIS INEFFECTUAL SON.
I *TOLD* YOU, SKULL--
--YOU'RE *NOT* KILLING ANYONE TODAY!
SMASHHH!
WHAT!?
AH--THE BLACK WIDOW.
YOU ARE A *PERSISTENT* WOMAN--
--BUT MORE--
--I *SEE* IN YOUR EYES YOU ARE A *KNOWLEDGEABLE* ONE AS WELL.
YOU *KNOW* THE SECRET OF THIS COMPLEX AND WHAT HAPPENED HERE. YOU *KNOW* WHAT THE FOOLS ATTEMPTED HERE--WITH FORCES THEY COULD NOT *BEGIN* TO COMPREHEND!
TELL ME, WIDOW, WHERE HAVE THEY TAKEN IT? WHERE!?

ONCE MORE...
...THE CARIBBEAN...
I AM PLACING THE RECEPTACLE ON THE SIPHON POINT.
IF CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, THE POWER DRAIN SHOULD ONLY LAST FOR 25 MILLISECONDS.
WITH THEIR SCIENCE COUNCIL CONCENTRATING ON THEIR *RESURRECTION PROJECT*, THAT SHORT A DRAIN SHOULDN'T REGISTER ON THEIR DAILY SECURITY SCANS.
BEEP! BEEP!
oh, god!
CENTRAL--THE POWER FLUX IS NOT PERFORMING AS PER OUR PROJECTIONS!
IT'S FLOODING THE CONTAINER--! IT CANNOT *HOLD*!
SZZZT
REPEAT--IT *CANNOT*--
HOLLLLDDDD
KA-BLAMMM

IN THE VILLAGE BELOW...
...ALL THE ISLANDERS CAN DO IS LOOK UP IN WONDER.
ALL SAVE ONE.
TEK!
EMERGENCY! INITIATE A KEMPLER SCAN OF THESE CO-ORDINATES. IT HAS HAPPENED AGAIN.
TELL THE MASTER QUICKLY--THE THIEVES ARE ON BOCA CALIENTE!
CANADA.
TELL ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW, MADAME ROMANOVA.
DO NOT LET PRIDE BLIND YOU. YOU ARE THE WEAKEST OF THE AVENGERS. CERTAINLY NO MATCH FOR ME.
REALLY, SKULL?
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE FRIGHTENED.
PRINCESS-- YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S LIKE!
YES I DO, IVAN.
HISTORY'S TOLD ME. HE'S A SICK LITTLE MAN FROM A TWISTED, SICK ERA.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT, SKULL?
YOUR TIME *ENDED* FIFTY YEARS AGO. NO ONE'S *AFRAID OF YOU* ANYMORE.
THEN THIS IS AN ERA OF *FOOLS*, RUSSIAN!
FOR THE SKULL *IS* FEAR!
FWASKHHK
FLIPPP!
YOU MISSED, SKULL!
GETTING OLD, PERHAPS?
FR-UNK

IDIOT OF A WOMAN!
IN *THIS* BODY I AM *YOUNGER* THAN YOU!
SWATT!
YES, I KNOW--A *CLONED* BODY OF CAPTAIN AMERICA.
PUNNT!
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, SKULL-- YOU'VE NEITHER HIS *SKILLS* NOR HIS *TALENTS*.

IN OTHER WORDS--THE BODY DOES *NOT* MAKE THE MAN!
SMASHHH!
ENOUGH!
POWW!
NO ONE TALKS TO ME LIKE THIS! *NO ONE!*
HAVE I HURT YOUR FEELINGS, SKULL?
WHACKKK!
WOMAN, THE SKULL HAS *NO* FEELINGS!
OHFFFFF!

DO YOU NOT *YET* UNDERSTAND, FOOL OF A WOMAN?
YOU *CANNOT* BEAT ME.
PERHAPS I DO NOT HAVE THE ATHLETIC SKILLS OF MY AGE-OLD ENEMY...
...BUT THE WEAPONS BUILT INTO THIS UNIFORM MORE THAN COMPENSATE FOR THAT SUPPOSED DEFICIENCY...
...WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
NOT REALLY.
?!?
BRZZ
ATTT
Y-YOU SEE, SKULL...
...WEAPONS SYSTEMS CAN BE--SHORT-CIRCUITED.
SSZZZZZ

INDEED.
BUT A *PYRRHIC* VICTORY AT BEST, MADAME.
MY ARMOR *INSULATED* ME FROM THE FEEDBACK. YOU WERE *NOT* SO FORTUNATE.
YOU HAVE REFUSED TO TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW, BLACK WIDOW--
--THUS, YOU ARE *NO* USE TO M--
BREEET
A TRANSMISSION!?
TELL ME QUICKLY--HAVE YOU FOUND THEM?
THAT'S IT, SKULL--KEEP TALKING--
--AND *LEARN* THAT MEN TURN THEIR BACK ON THE WIDOW AT THEIR OWN PERIL!
THE ENERGY READINGS ARE *PROOF*, YOU FOOL!
A WIDOW'S STING AT THE BASE OF THE NECK, HERR RED SKULL--
IT *IS* THEM. INITIATE TELEPORTATION--
--AND YOU'RE A *DEAD*--
NO!
--NOW!

BLAST IT--
NO!!
HE GOT AWAY--!
I *ALMOST* HAD HIM AND HE GOT AWAY!
'TASHA-- YOU'RE ALIVE!
NOT MANY PEOPLE CAN SAY THAT AFTER GOIN' ONE ON ONE AGAINST THE RED SKULL.
IT DOESN'T MATTER, IVAN.
I SHOULD HAVE *BEEN* BETTER... *DONE* BETTER!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE *FAILED!*
YEAH? LET'S CHECK ON YOUR FRIENDS--
--AND SEE HOW *THEY* FEEL AFTER YOU JUST SAVED THEIR LIVES.

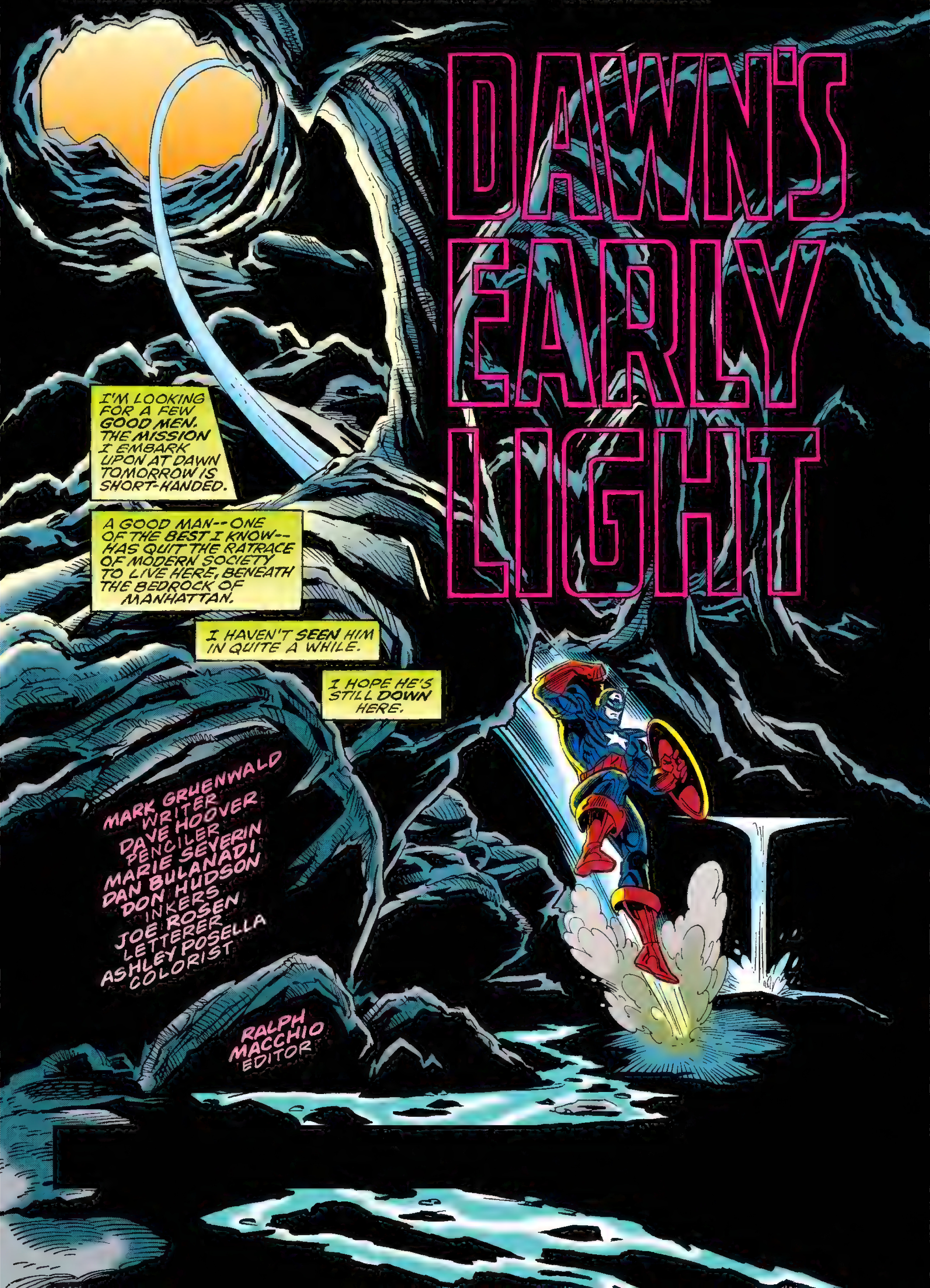
HOURS LATER...
AVENGERS MANSION.
BE *CAREFUL* WITH HIM, *DEATHCRY*--
--HE WAS *BADLY* INJURED.
DON'T WORRY, NATASHA.
I'LL GET HIM TO THE *INFIRMARY* IN ONE PIECE. AFTER ALL I'M *NOT* A BABY!
SO--TELL ME. DID YOU GUYS HAVE *FUN* ON THIS MISSION?
THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE THE *LAST* WORD I'D USE TO DESCRIBE THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, DC.
NOW I WANT EVERYONE *READY* FOR A DEBRIEFING IN THIRTY MINUTES.
I'M AFRAID THAT'S GOING TO HAVE TO *WAIT*, NATASHA.
WHO--!?
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU!?

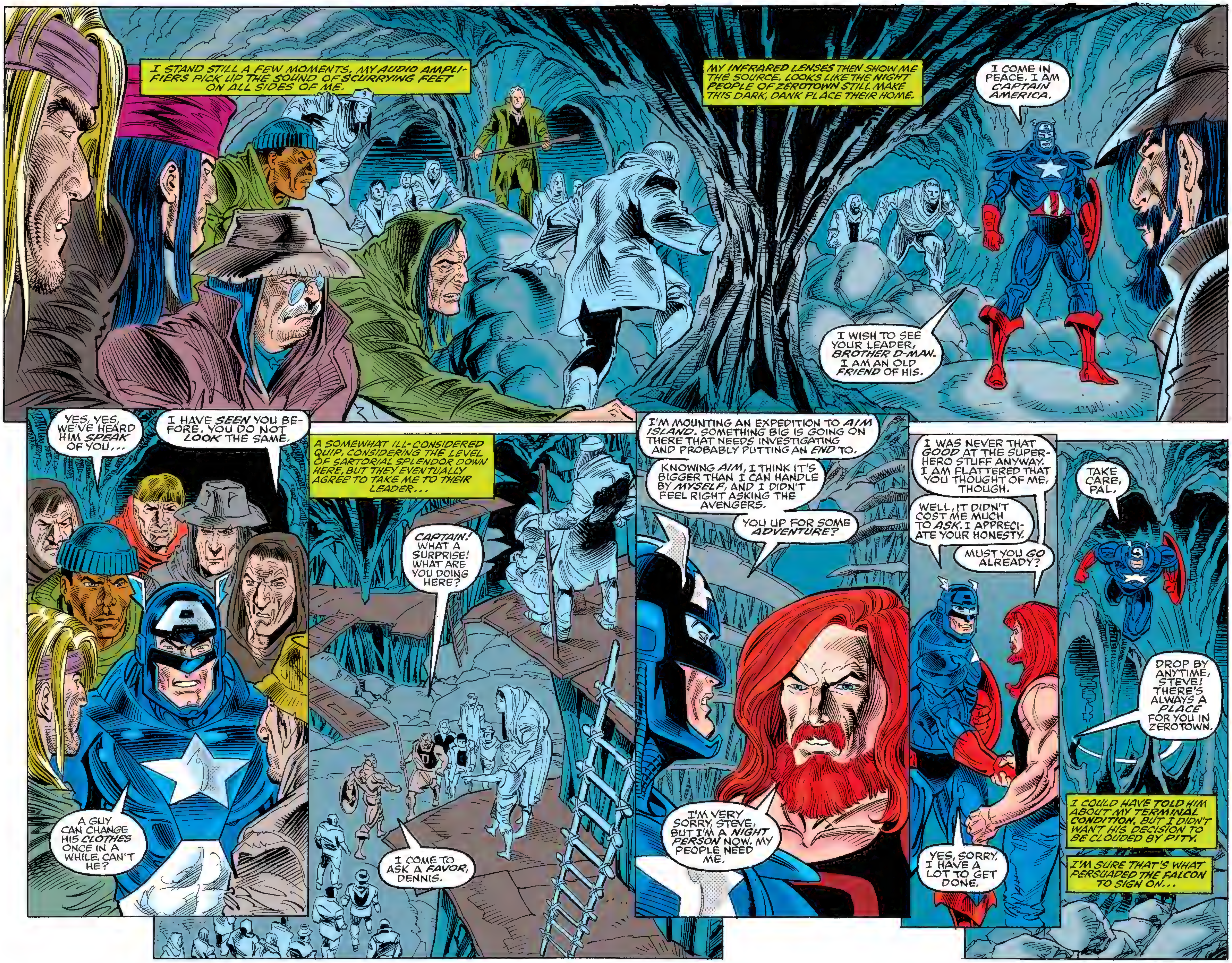
A LOT.
AVENGERS, I HAVEN'T BEEN COMPLETELY *HONEST* WITH YOU.
AND NOW, ON THE EVE OF MY *LAST* MISSION--MAYBE IT'S TIME I CAME *CLEAN*.
Beginning in CAPTAIN AMERICA #440 : TAKING A.I.M., Part One. Then join us here next month for PART TWO and the return of a long lost character from the DAWN of comics and the growing mystery of the RED SKULL!

MARVEL COMICS
THE STAR-SPANGLED AVENGER
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CAPTAIN AMERICA®
440
JUN '95
CAP LEADS FREE SPIRIT™, FALCON™, AND JACK FLAG™ IN THE AVENGERS™
FIRST STRIKE AGAINST A.I.M.!
DAVE HOUSER
TAKING A.I.M.
PART 1 OF 4

STEVE ROGERS. . . ENDOWED WITH A SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE WHICH AFTER DECADES OF PEAK EFFICIENCY HAS DETERIORATED TO THE POINT OF ABSOLUTE IMMOBILITY. NOW AIDED BY AN EXOSKELETON THAT ENABLES HIM TO MOVE, HE FIGHTS FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM KNOWING THAT AT ANY MOMENT THE PARALYSIS WILL REACH HIS HEART! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . CAPTAIN AMERICA!

DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT

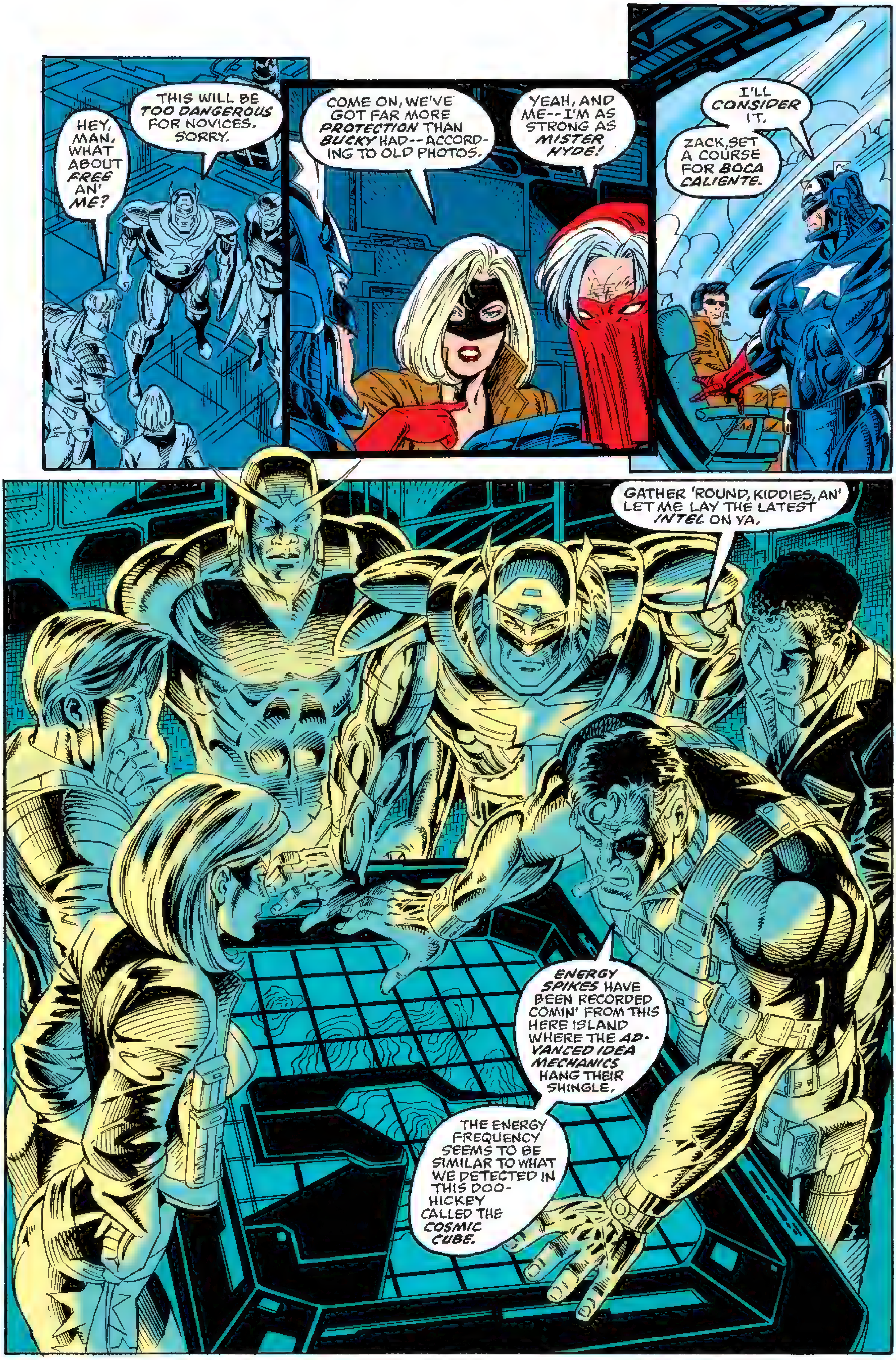

I'M LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN. THE MISSION I EMBARK UPON AT DAWN TOMORROW IS SHORT-HANDED.
A GOOD MAN--ONE OF THE BEST I KNOW--HAS QUIT THE RATRACE OF MODERN SOCIETY TO LIVE HERE, BENEATH THE BEDROCK OF MANHATTAN.
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN QUITE A WHILE.
I HOPE HE'S STILL DOWN HERE.
MARK GRUENWALD WRITER
DAVE HOOVER PENCILER
MARIE SEVERIN DAN BULANADI DON HUDSON INKERS
JOE ROSEN LETTERER
ASHLEY POSELLA COLORIST
RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR

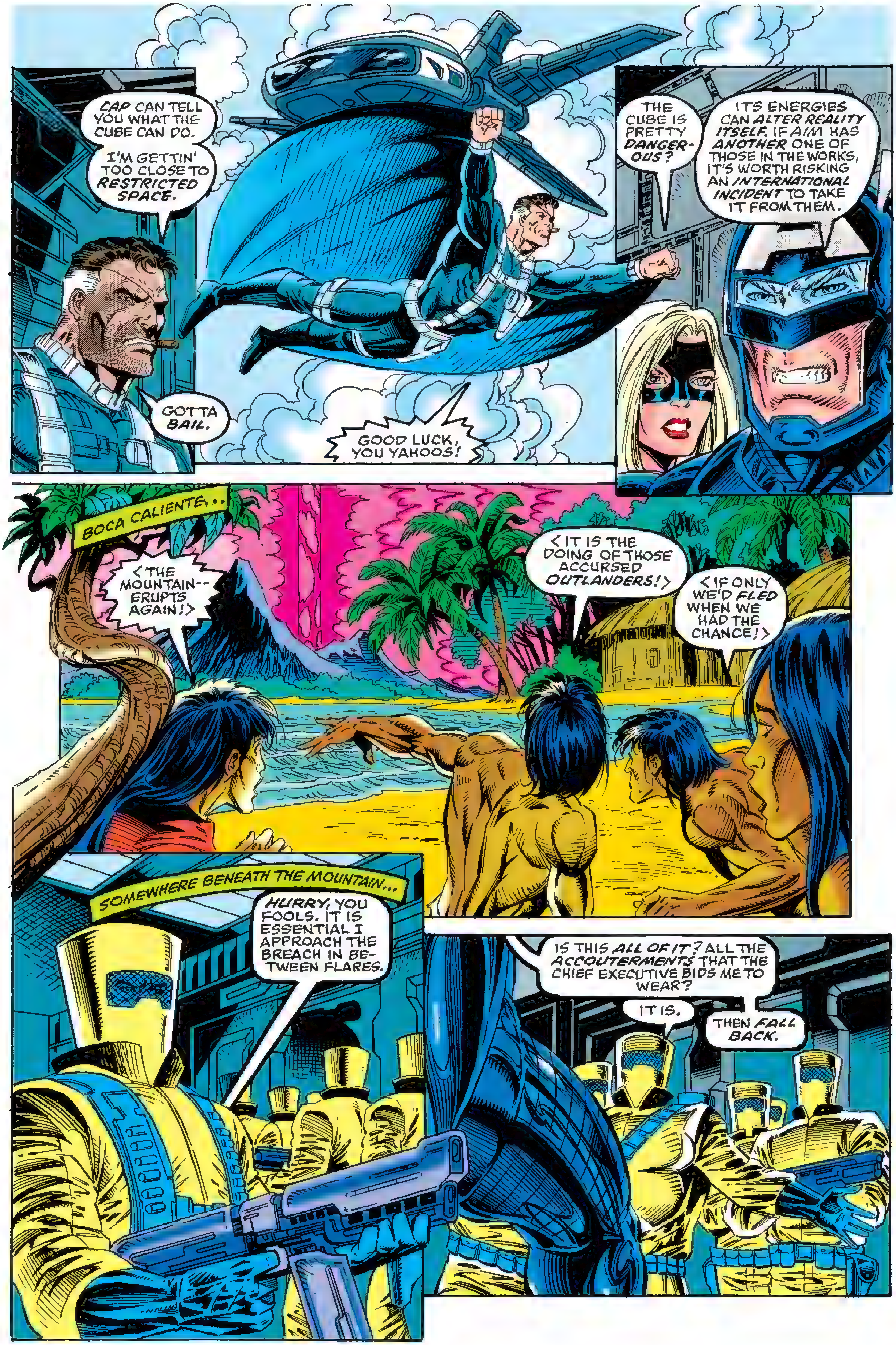

I STAND STILL A FEW MOMENTS. MY AUDIO AMPLIFIERS PICK UP THE SOUND OF SCURRYING FEET ON ALL SIDES OF ME.
MY INFRARED LENSES THEN SHOW ME THE SOURCE. LOOKS LIKE THE NIGHT PEOPLE OF ZEROTOWN STILL MAKE THIS DARK, DANK PLACE THEIR HOME.
I COME IN PEACE. I AM CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I WISH TO SEE YOUR LEADER, BROTHER D-MAN. I AM AN OLD FRIEND OF HIS.
YES, YES, WE'VE HEARD HIM SPEAK OF YOU...
I HAVE SEEN YOU BEFORE. YOU DO NOT LOOK THE SAME.
A GUY CAN CHANGE HIS CLOTHES ONCE IN A WHILE, CAN'T HE?
A SOMEWHAT ILL-CONSIDERED QUIP, CONSIDERING THE LEVEL OF SARTORIAL SPLENDOR DOWN HERE, BUT THEY EVENTUALLY AGREE TO TAKE ME TO THEIR LEADER...
CAPTAIN! WHAT A SURPRISE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I COME TO ASK A FAVOR, DENNIS.
I'M MOUNTING AN EXPEDITION TO AIM ISLAND. SOMETHING BIG IS GOING ON THERE THAT NEEDS INVESTIGATING AND PROBABLY PUTTING AN END TO.
KNOWING AIM, I THINK IT'S BIGGER THAN I CAN HANDLE BY MYSELF, AND I DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT ASKING THE AVENGERS.
YOU UP FOR SOME ADVENTURE?
I'M VERY SORRY, STEVE, BUT I'M A NIGHT PERSON NOW. MY PEOPLE NEED ME.
I WAS NEVER THAT GOOD AT THE SUPER-HERO STUFF ANYWAY. I AM FLATTERED THAT YOU THOUGHT OF ME, THOUGH.
WELL, IT DIDN'T COST ME MUCH TO ASK. I APPRECIATE YOUR HONESTY.
MUST YOU GO ALREADY?
YES, SORRY. I HAVE A LOT TO GET DONE.
TAKE CARE, PAL.
DROP BY ANYTIME, STEVE! THERE'S ALWAYS A PLACE FOR YOU IN ZEROTOWN.
I COULD HAVE TOLD HIM ABOUT MY TERMINAL CONDITION, BUT I DIDN'T WANT HIS DECISION TO BE CLOUDED BY PITY.
I'M SURE THAT'S WHAT PERSUADED THE FALCON TO SIGN ON...

BROOKLYN...
THERE HE IS, SHOOTING HOOPS, THE MAN I'M LOOKING FOR.
YO YO YO-- CHECK IT OUT! THE FALCON!
SHAQ 1
WASSUP, MAN? WE DIN'T DO NOTHIN'!
ARE YOU JESSE BLACK CROW?
AND IF I AM?
SHAQ 1
I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU IN PRIVATE.
WORD IS THAT YOU'RE SOME SORT OF NATIVE AMERICAN MYSTIC.
IS THAT SO?
I HAVE A FRIEND NAMED CAPTAIN AMERICA. HE'S DYING. MEDICINE CAN'T SAVE HIM-- NOT THE SCIENTIFIC KIND.
I WAS HOPING-- PRAYING ACTUALLY-- THAT THERE'D BE SOMETHING YOU MIGHT DO FOR HIM.
YOU'RE KIDDING ME, AREN'T YOU? ME--A HEALER?
DON'T YOU THINK IF I WAS I'D HAVE DONE SOMETHING ABOUT THESE USELESS LEGS OF MINE?

TISCH HOSPITAL, MANHATTAN...
We're all friends of Cap here... me, Jack, Fabian...
TAKE CARE, ARNIE! WE'LL CHECK IN ON YOU SOON AS WE GET BACK!
...and especially Arnie lying there. He and Cap go way back!
Arnie's got Cancer. Kept it from us all 'til he collapsed.
YOU THINK HE'S GONNA HOLD ON TILL WE GET BACK, CATHY?
I HOPE SO, JACK. I KNOW CAP WANTS TO SEE HIM AGAIN--
--BUT WITH THIS BIG DEAL MISSION COMING UP--!
UM, ARE WE SURE THIS IS SAFE...?
SURE, FABO-- YOU GO FIRST.
I--NNG-- CAN'T LOOK DOWN!
THEN CHECK OUT WHAT'S ABOVE US!
LOOKS LIKE CAP CALLED IN SOME BIG TIME MARKERS.

Our platform rendezvouses with an **open hatch**, we suit up in the hold, and then climb onto the **main deck**. There the **Falcon** and some **older guy** I never met are waiting...
NICK, THESE KIDS ARE CAP'S TRAINEES, **FREE SPIRIT** AND **JACK FLAG**.
BUCKY AND **BUCKETTE**, HMM?
THIS IS NICK FURY, HEAD HONCHO OF SHIELD.
LIKEWISE.
PLEASED TO **MEET** YOU, SIR.
CAP'S NOT HERE?
HE JUST **RADIOED** TO SAY--
I'M HERE.
* TWO REFERENCES TO **FURY**'S VERY OWN LMT. SERIES -- ON SALE NOW! --SALESMAN RALF
D-MAN'S A NO. ANY WORD FROM **HAWKEYE**?
NOPE.
THEN I GUESS IT'S JUST *YOU AND ME*, PAL. UNLESS *NICK* HERE'S CHANGED HIS MIND.
SORRY, WINGHEAD. I GOT STRICT ORDERS TO **STEER CLEAR**.
BESIDES, I'VE GOT THAT MESS WITH **HYDRA** AND **KITTY** TO STRAIGHTEN OUT IN NEW YORK. NOT THAT I'M IN A HURRY TA' GET BACK... IF LOCKHART CATCHES ME SNEAKING ANOTHER STOGIE, I'M DEAD MEAT!*


HEY, MAN, WHAT ABOUT FREE AN' ME?
THIS WILL BE TOO DANGEROUS FOR NOVICES. SORRY.
COME ON, WE'VE GOT FAR MORE PROTECTION THAN BUCKY HAD--ACCORDING TO OLD PHOTOS.
YEAH, AND ME--I'M AS STRONG AS MISTER HYDE!
I'LL CONSIDER IT.
ZACK, SET A COURSE FOR BOCA CALIENTE.
GATHER 'ROUND, KIDDIES, AN' LET ME LAY THE LATEST INTEL ON YA.
ENERGY SPIKES HAVE BEEN RECORDED COMIN' FROM THIS HERE ISLAND WHERE THE ADVANCED IDEA MECHANICS HANG THEIR SHINGLE.
THE ENERGY FREQUENCY SEEMS TO BE SIMILAR TO WHAT WE DETECTED IN THIS DOOHICKEY CALLED THE COSMIC CUBE.


CAP CAN TELL YOU WHAT THE CUBE CAN DO.
I'M GETTIN' TOO CLOSE TO RESTRICTED SPACE.
GOTTA BAIL.
GOOD LUCK, YOU YAHOOS!
THE CUBE IS PRETTY DANGEROUS?
ITS ENERGIES CAN ALTER REALITY ITSELF. IF AIM HAS ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE IN THE WORKS, IT'S WORTH RISKING AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT TO TAKE IT FROM THEM.
BOCA CALIENTE...
<THE MOUNTAIN-- ERUPTS AGAIN!>
<IT IS THE DOING OF THOSE ACCURSED OUTLANDERS!>
<IF ONLY WE'D FLED WHEN WE HAD THE CHANCE!>
SOMEWHERE BENEATH THE MOUNTAIN...
HURRY, YOU FOOLS. IT IS ESSENTIAL I APPROACH THE BREACH IN BETWEEN FLARES.
IS THIS ALL OF IT? ALL THE ACCOUTERMENTS THAT THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE BIDS ME TO WEAR?
IT IS.
THEN FALL BACK.

I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO *VACATE THE PREMISES* AT ONCE. I HAVE TELEMETRICALLY BEGUN THE *UNLOCKING SEQUENCE.*
I AM THE **M**ENTAL **O**RGANISM **D**ESIGNED FOR **A**GGRESSIVE **M**ANEUVERS.
SINCE I WENT ON-LINE I HAVE BEEN A.I.M.'S MOST ADVANCED **CYBERNETIC OPERATIVE,** HAVING UNDERTAKEN 416 MISSIONS WITH A POINT 92 EFFICIENCY PARAMETER.
YOU HEARD HER-- ***MOVE OUT!***
I HAVE NEVER **FLINCHED** IN THE LINE OF DUTY.
YET WHAT LIES IN CHAMBER 137 FILLS ME WITH SUCH **DREAD**--
--THAT MY EVERY SENSOR SCREAMS TO ME TO **ABORT** MY PRESENT COURSE OF ACTION.
IN THE NEXT CHAMBER LIES A **POWER SOURCE** THAT NOT EVEN MY MASTERS CAN CONTROL--
--AND THEY SEND ME IN AN ATTEMPT TO REPAIR THE **RUPTURE** IN ITS CONTAINMENT VESSEL.
IT WOULD APPEAR MY MASTERS HAVE RECLASSIFIED ME **"EXPENDABLE."**

A.I.M CONTROL ROOM...
MR. BRANNEX, WE LOST TELEMETRY WITH MODAM AS SOON AS THE BREACH FLARED.
POSITION?
THREE METERS FROM THE BREACH.
KEEP ATTEMPTING TO MAKE CONTACT, AGENT CN-232.
AGENT TH-662, GET ME R UNIT. OPERATION: HEADSTART MUST BE PUT ON-LINE AT ONCE.
FIVE KILOMETERS FROM BOCA CALIENTE...
HOW WILL WE GET THROUGH THEIR SECURITY?
I HAVE GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WITH THE ENERGY FLARES AND CAPTAIN AMERICA'S IMMINENT ARRIVAL...
...OUR GOOD FRIENDS AT A.I.M. WILL HAVE THEIR HANDS TOO FULL TO CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH US.
YOU'RE SURE CAP IS GOING TO BE HERE?
WITH THE INFORMATION I LEAKED HIM, I AM DEAD CERTAIN OF IT.

DON'T WORRY, DEAR *SNAPDRAGON*...
...YOUR PREVIOUS CAPTAIN WILL GET HIS *ANTIDOTE*.
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND...
SET HER DOWN HERE, ZACK.
COPY THAT.
HERE'S THE *RESPIRATOR-DEVICES*. THANKS TO PYM PARTICLES, EACH WILL GIVE YOU *FOUR HOURS* OF COMPRESSED AIR.
FABIAN--ZACK--AS SOON AS WE DEBARK, YOU WILL GO TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND.
RELEASE YOUR *ROBOT ARMY* AT 1400 HOURS UNLESS YOU HEAR FROM ME OTHERWISE.
THANKS FOR *TAKING ME* ON THIS MISSION, CAP. I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.
"CAP"? NO "CAPARINO" OR "CAPSTER"?
NOT *THIS* TIME...SIR.
FOLLOW ME.

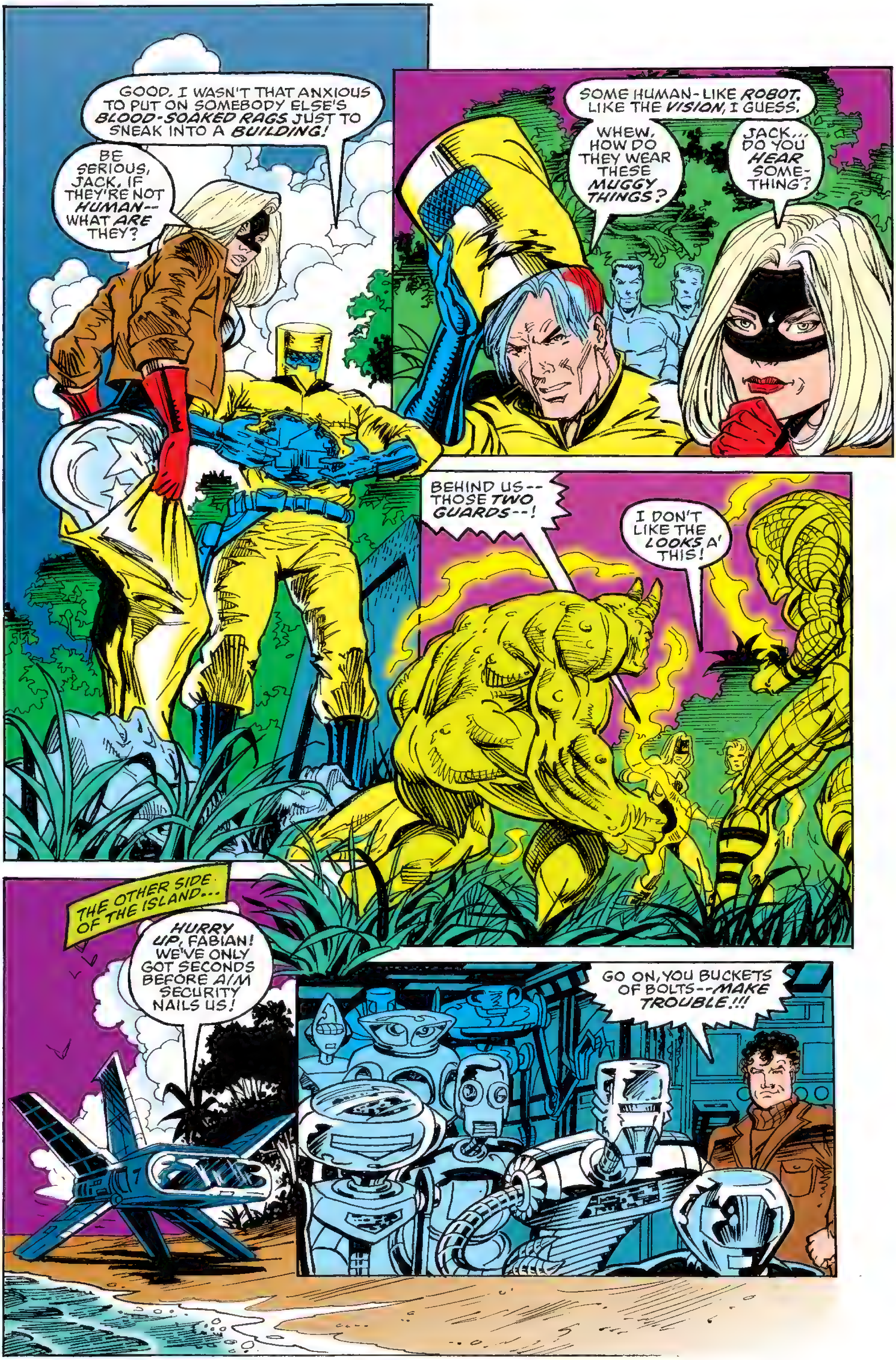
I WAS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN FOR THIS MISSION.
I'VE GOT ONE GOOD MAN AND TWO KIDS BARELY OUT OF THEIR TEENS.
IT IS A MEASURE OF MY DESPERATION HERE THAT I'VE AGREED TO TAKE THEM.
IT IS TRUE I TOOK BUCKY-- AND EVEN RICK JONES-- INTO BATTLE WITH LESS EXPERIENCE THAN FREE/JACK HAVE.
BOTH HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES RESOURCEFUL, CAPABLE ALLIES IN THE PAST...
...BUT THE STAKES ARE SKY-HIGH HERE.
I JUST PRAY THEY'RE UP TO THIS.
THE ISLANDERS' FISHING BOATS...
MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR US TO HIDE BENEATH.
AND THUS WE PASS THROUGH A.I.M.'S PERIMETER.

COOL. IT WORKED!
WE WAIT UNTIL THEY FINISH TAKING IN THEIR CATCH OF THE DAY.
<THE FLARE AGAIN!>
<IT SEEMS TO BE LARGER THAN IT WAS THIS MORNING!>
THEY'RE GONE.
FREE/JACK--PROCEED TO THE SECURITY CENTER AND DISABLE IT IF POSSIBLE. THEN RETURN HERE.
LET'S DO IT, SAM!

AVENGERS MANSION, NEW YORK...
HERE'S THE SCOOP. THE *ENERGY SPIKE* ON BOCA CALIENTE IS SIMILAR TO THE ONE WE JUST INVESTIGATED IN THE *YUKON*--
--THOUGH POSSIBLY EVEN *MORE POTENT*.
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO *INVESTIGATE*.
WAIT A MINUTE, MADAME CHAIRMAN. LET ME *UNDERSTAND* THIS. ISN'T THIS THE *SAME PLACE* WHERE CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS JUST REPORTED TO US HE WAS GOING?
WHY DIDN'T WE GO WITH *HIM*?
I WAS NOT AWARE AT THE TIME OF THE SPIKE'S SIMILARITY TO THE ONE IN THE YUKON.
THIS MAKES THE MATTER MORE *DIRE* THAN I HAD THOUGHT. UNTOLD LIVES MAY BE IN JEOPARDY--
--NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS *CAP'S*!

BOCA CALIENTE.
MAN, IT'S HOTTER'N THE DEVIL'S SAUNA HERE!
HA HA. I GOT MISTER HYDE'S CHEMICAL SHOWER REVVING ME UP. WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING, FREEBIE?
MY NATURAL FEMALE STAMINA.
YEAH, RIGHT.
UH-OH.
IF YOU NEED TO STOP, JACK, JUST LET ME KNOW!
ACCORDING TO THE MAP DISPLAY, THAT'S THE ENTRANCE TO THE SECURITY BUILDING.
IT'S GUARDED LIKE IT WAS INDICATED.
READY?
WAIT-- SOME-ONE'S COMING FROM THE OTHER WAY!
HALT!
SHOW US YOUR HANDS!
GLADLY.
VRSH

HOLEE--!
TELL ME THAT'S NOT WHO I *THINK* IT IS.
WISH I COULD.
"HE BLEW AWAY THOSE GUARDS LIKE THEY WERE *NOTHING!*"
"WHEN IT COMES TO *BAD*, THE *RED SKULL'S* IN A CLASS BY HIMSELF."
CAP DIDN'T *SAY* ANYTHING ABOUT HIM BEING HERE. I'LL BET HE DOESN'T *KNOW!*
WE DARE NOT *CALL* HIM AND TELL HIM-- *AIM* MAY BE MONITORING ALL *FREQUENCIES!*
HEY, THAT'S ODD-- THERE'S NO *BLOOD* COMING FROM THEIR WOUNDS. TAKE A LOOK, JACK--I DON'T THINK THESE AGENTS WERE *REALLY HUMAN!*

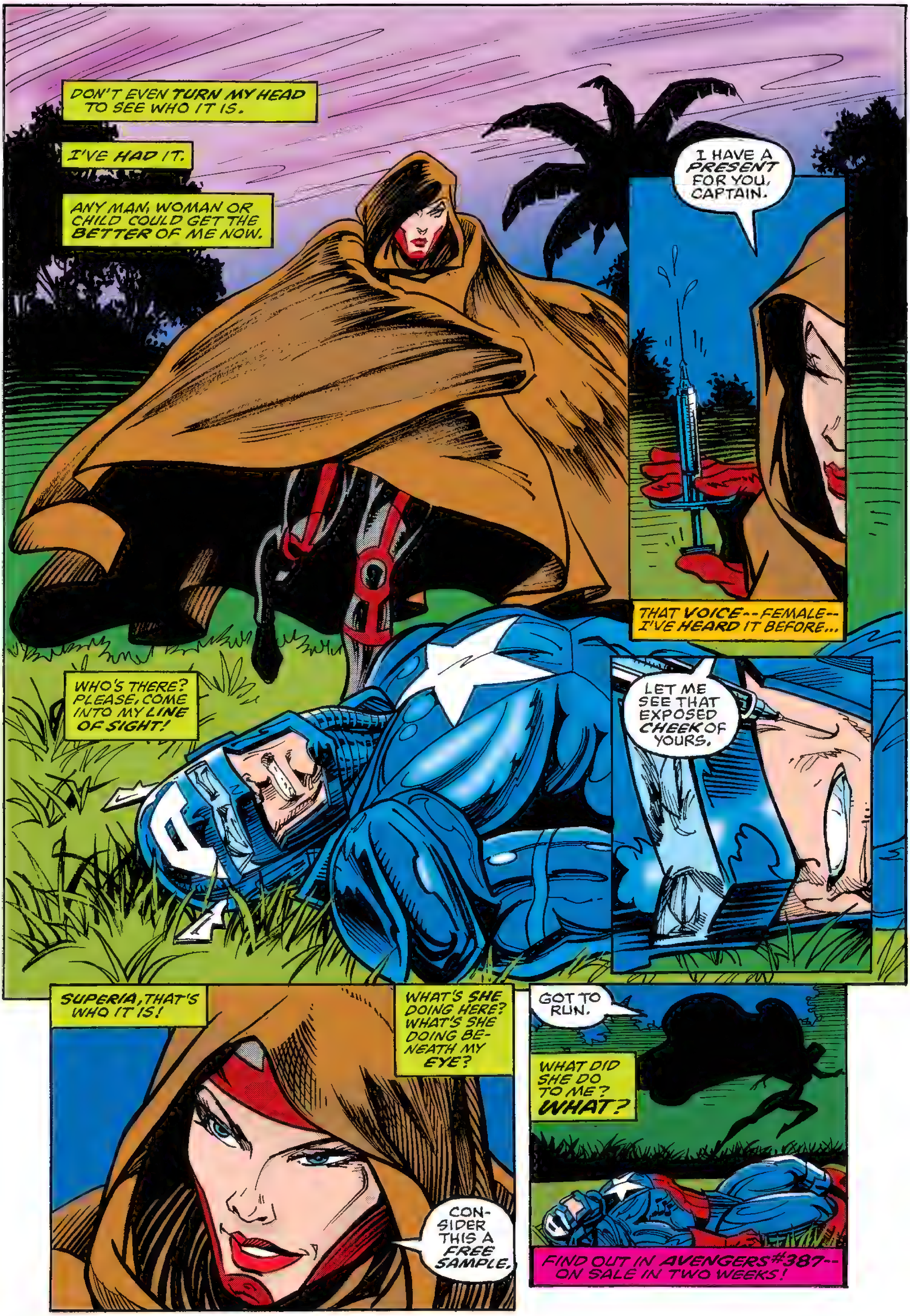

GOOD. I WASN'T THAT ANXIOUS TO PUT ON SOMEBODY ELSE'S BLOOD-SOAKED RAGS JUST TO SNEAK INTO A BUILDING!
BE SERIOUS, JACK. IF THEY'RE NOT HUMAN-- WHAT ARE THEY?
SOME HUMAN-LIKE ROBOT. LIKE THE VISION, I GUESS.
WHEW. HOW DO THEY WEAR THESE MUGGY THINGS?
JACK... DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
BEHIND US-- THOSE TWO GUARDS--!
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS A' THIS!
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND...
HURRY UP, FABIAN! WE'VE ONLY GOT SECONDS BEFORE AIM SECURITY NAILS US!
GO ON, YOU BUCKETS OF BOLTS--MAKE TROUBLE!!!

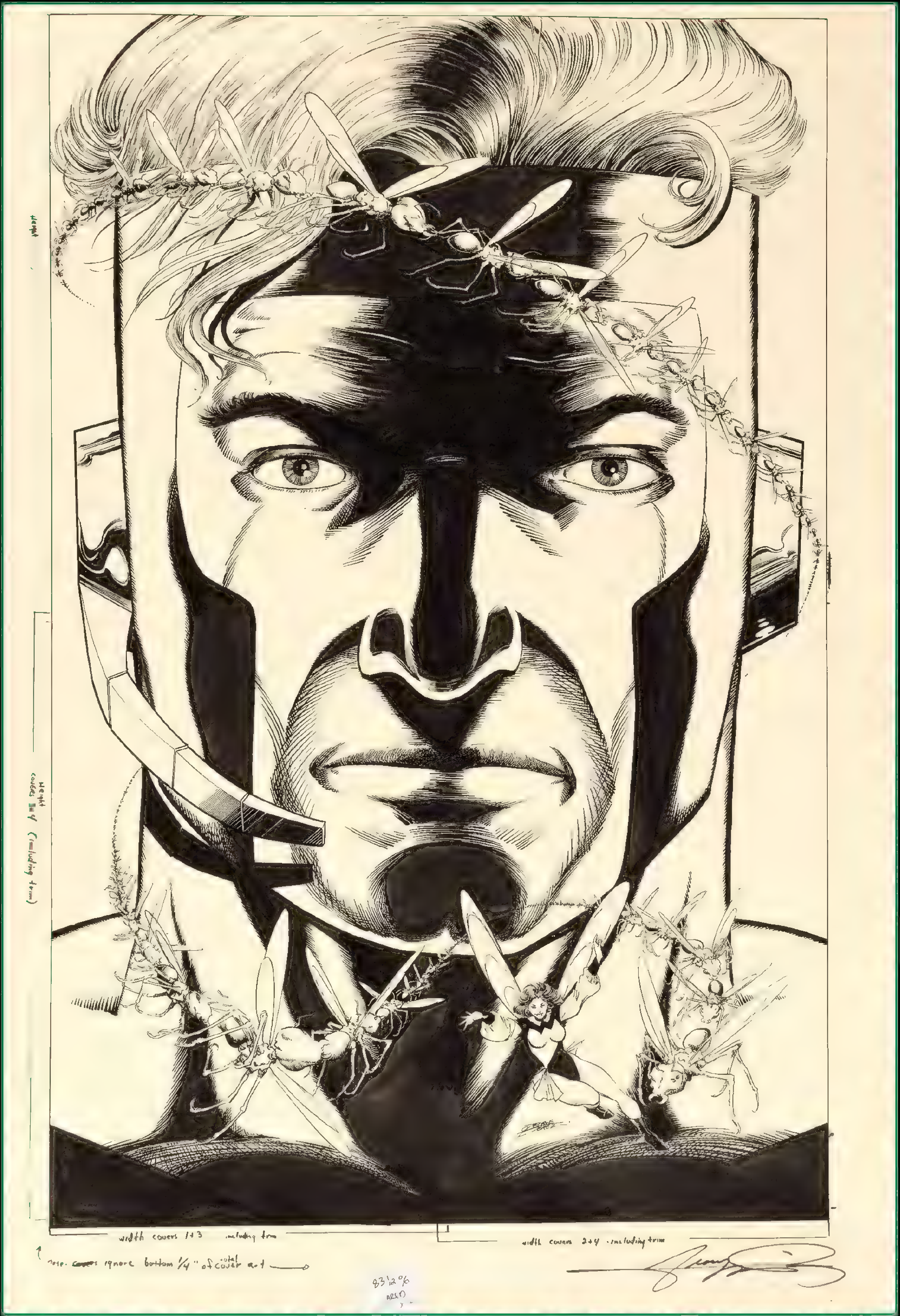
ELSEWHERE...
SAM AND I TAKE THE ZIGZAG APPROACH BENEATH THE TREE TOPS.
HIGHER WOULD BE FASTER, BUT MORE LIKELY TO BE SEEN.
I SIGNAL, WE LAND.
SAM WAS MY PARTNER LONGER THAN ANYBODY ELSE. WE STILL READ EACH OTHER'S NONVERBAL CUES EFFORTLESSLY.
BIG CRATER BELOW. ACCORDING TO MY SENSORS THIS IS THE SITE OF THE ENERGY FLARES.
WIDER THAN I THOUGHT IT'D BE.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT?
SHOULD BE SIMPLE TO SWOOP IN OVER THEIR HEADS AND GO DOWN THAT SHAFT--
WAIT A MINUTE! THAT THING FLARES AGAIN, YOU COULD BE KILLED--!
I DON'T HAVE A LOT TO LOSE, SAM.
KEEP ME COVERED!

SENSORS GOING BALLISTIC--!
THE ENERGY SPIKE--!
ALMOST FLEW RIGHT *INTO IT*--!
WHAT IN THE--? SENSORS *BLINKED OUT*--!
MY POWER'S SHUTTING DOWN!
MY ARMOR--TOTALLY *SEIZED UP!* I CAN'T *MOVE!*
CAAAP!
DID HE FLY STRAIGHT *INTO* THAT *BLAST*--
--OR DID HE GET INSIDE BEFORE IT *ERUPTED*?
I DON'T *SEE* HIM AT ALL.
OH, PLEASE, LORD, LET HIM HAVE *MADE IT!*

A.I.M. CONTROL ROOM...
SIR, THIRTEEN MORE AGENTS MALFUNCTIONED WITH THAT LAST FLARE--THE WHOLE MAINTENANCE CREW!
DISTURBANCE ON ROJO BEACH--CRAFT SIGHTING.
PUT IT ON SKYCAM, AGENT NF-678!
WHAT IS THIS?
IT APPEARS TO BE A NUMBER OF MECHANOIDS. NOT OURS.
THIS IS ENEMY ACTION. MOBILIZE ALL FIGHTER UNITS!
THIRTY KILOMETERS AWAY...
INSTRUMENTS INDICATE WE'LL REACH A.I.M.'S RADAR IN 30 SECONDS, TASHA.
HOW DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS--BY STEALTH OR STORM?
STORM.

THE CRATER...
SOMETHING'S WACKED HERE. SINCE THAT LAST FLARE, ALL THOSE AGENTS BELOW HAVE ABANDONED THEIR HEAVY MACHINERY...
...AND HAVE BEEN FIGHTING AMONGST THEMSELVES! WHY--?
MAYBE THEY'LL BE TOO BUSY TO NOTICE ME!
HEY! THAT AGENT'S SHAPE-CHANGING-- INTO A KILLER SHRIKE LOOKALIKE!
THE AGENT'S AN ADAPTOID?!?
I CAN'T MOVE.
MY ARMOR'S MALFUNCTIONED AND I'M PARALYZED.
I HEAR SOMETHING. FOOTSTEPS.


DON'T EVEN TURN MY HEAD TO SEE WHO IT IS.
I'VE HAD IT.
ANY MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD COULD GET THE BETTER OF ME NOW.
I HAVE A PRESENT FOR YOU, CAPTAIN.
THAT VOICE--FEMALE--I'VE HEARD IT BEFORE...
WHO'S THERE? PLEASE, COME INTO MY LINE OF SIGHT!
LET ME SEE THAT EXPOSED CHEEK OF YOURS.
SUPERIA, THAT'S WHO IT IS!
WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE? WHAT'S SHE DOING BENEATH MY EYE?
CONSIDER THIS A FREE SAMPLE.
GOT TO RUN.
WHAT DID SHE DO TO ME? WHAT?
FIND OUT IN AVENGERS #387--ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS!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MARVEL DOUBLE FEATURE: AVENGERS/GIANT-MAN #379-382 COMBINED FLIPBOOK COVER ART BY GEORGE PÉREZ
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MARVEL COMICS
387
JUN '95
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
TAKING A.I.M.
PART 2 OF 4
MIKE DEODATO JR.

THE SMALL, MOUNTAINOUS ISLAND OF BOCA CALIENTE...
...SOMEWHERE IN THE CARIBBEAN SEA...
...ON A SOFT SPRING NIGHT.
A NIGHT WHOSE SERENITY IS PIERCED BY THE EXPLOSION OF ENERGY ERUPTING FROM A MYSTERIOUS COMPLEX BUILT DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS.
THE NOISE IS DEAFENING...
...OVERWHELMING THE SOUND OF POUNDING FEET...
...AND RASPING BREATH.
THE SOUND OF TERROR.
NO!
GRRRRR
UNFFFFF!

PERIMETER PATROL ZED DELTA 2 TO A.I.M. SECURITY CENTRAL--
--SCANS INDICATE ENERGY LEVELS REACHING DANGEROUS LEVELS. ANOTHER ERUPTION COULD PROVE DISASTROUS TO ISLAND CONTROL.
SUGGEST HUMAN POPULATION BE SEDATED TO PREVENT ANY DAMAGING CONTAMINATION.
RETURNING TO DAMAGE CONTROL AT CENTRAL COMPLEX.
THEY'RE GONE!
SLURPPP!
YOU SAVED ME, DOG! YOU CAME OUT OF NOWHERE AND PUSHED ME OUT OF SIGHT!
JUST LIKE I IM--
--eh?
WHAT'S THIS?
SOME TYPE OF ARMOR-- BUT WHO--?
GRRRR
WHAT IS IT, DOG?
WHA--?! THIS IS FANTASTIC!
THAT'S WHO THEY'RE LOOKING FOR, DOG! DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE HIM?
THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE AVENGER-- CAPTAIN AMERICA!
WHA--?!
BUCKY?!

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

TAKING A.I.M.

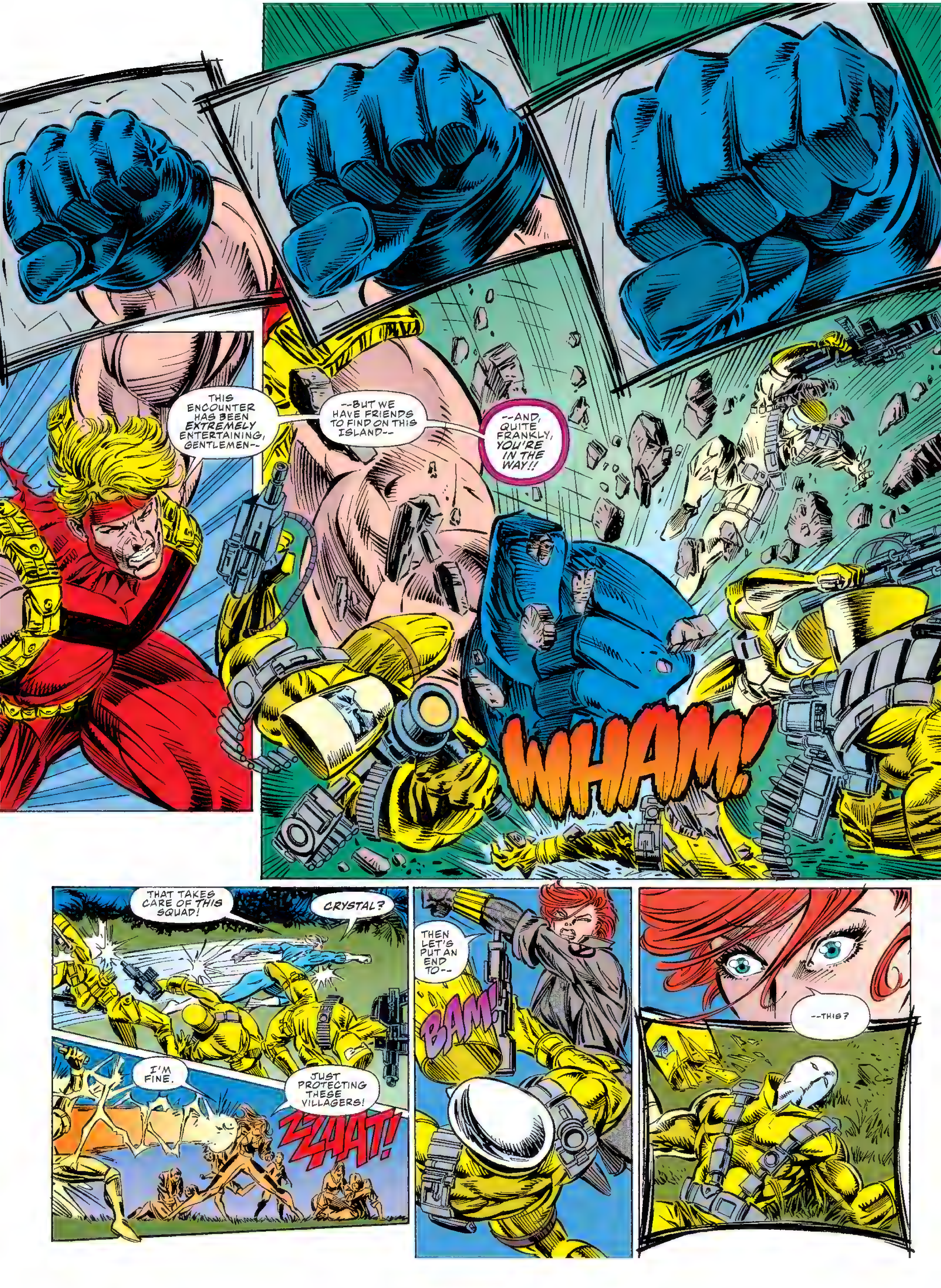
PART 2 OF 4

ISLAND OF SPIRITS

BOB HARRAS & TERRY KAVANAGH
STORY
BOB HARRAS
WRITER
MIKE DEODATO
BREAKDOWNS
TOM PALMER
FINISHES
JOHN KALISZ
COLORIST
BILL OAKLEY
LETTERER
RALPH MACCHIO
EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD
EDITOR IN CHIEF

NO--OF COURSE YOU'RE NOT.
I'M SORRY. I'M A LITTLE CONFUSED. I THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEONE ELSE.
THEN MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU GOT SOME EYEGLASSES, CAP--
--CONSIDERING THAT KID IS ABOUT TEN YEARS YOUNGER THAN I AM!
CAP...?
WHAT'S WRONG?
WOOF! WOOF!
BUCKY?
WHAT IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN IS GOING ON?

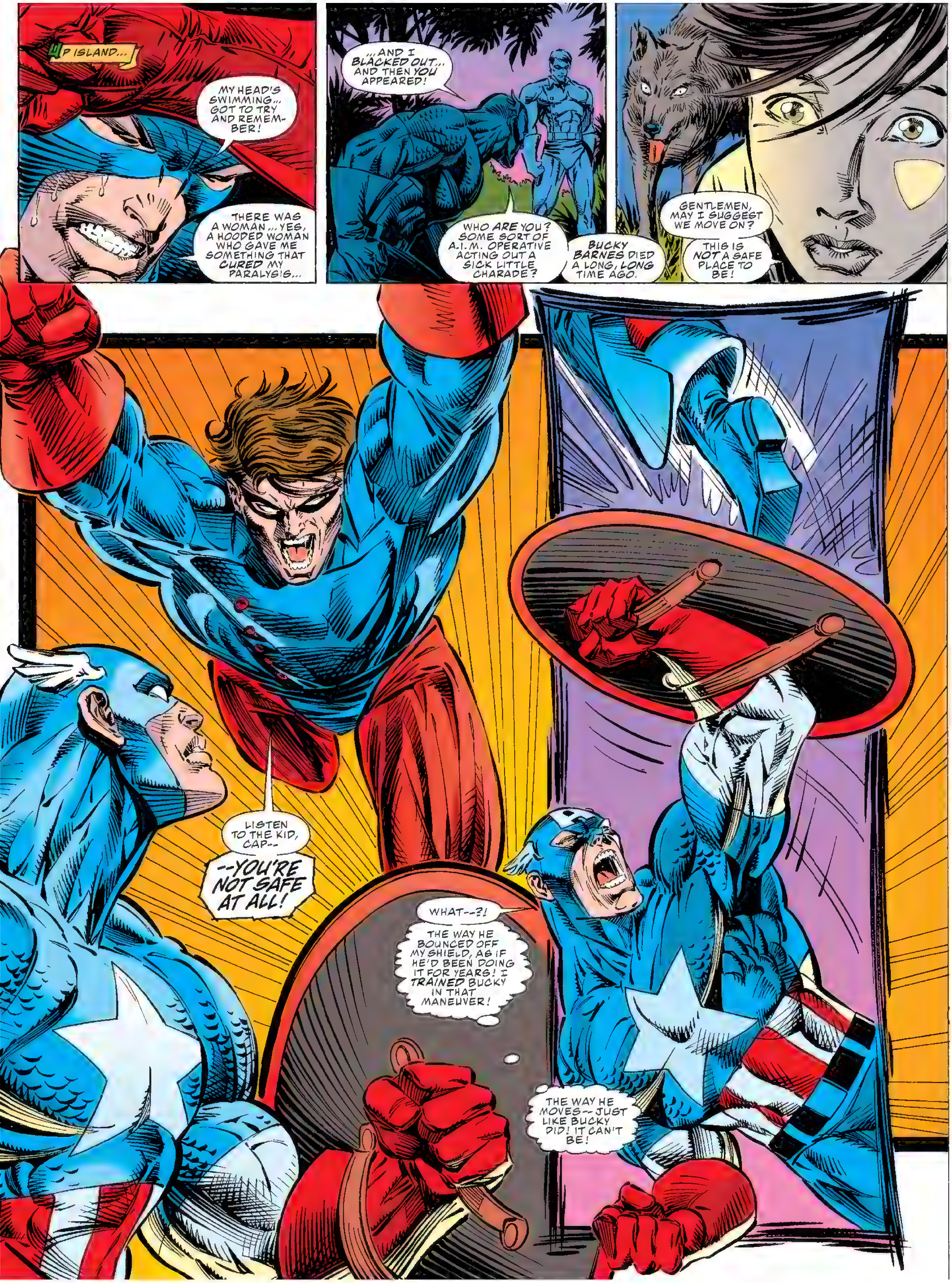
SEVERAL KILOMETERS AWAY--
--IN BOCA CALIENTE'S ONLY VILLAGE--
--ALL-OUT WAR RAGES BECAUSE--
--THE AVENGERS HAVE LANDED!
WELL, HERK--CAP WAS RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING--
--THIS PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH A.I.M. AGENTS!
THEY ARE HENRY PYM --THE GIANT-MAN.
HERCULES, THE PRINCE OF POWER.
YOUR OBSERVATION IS OBVIOUS, AVENGER.
BUDDA-BUDDA!
THIS PLACE HAS ALWAYS BEEN OURS!
NATASHA ROMANOFF--THE ELEGANT AND DEADLY BLACK WIDOW.
FSHWAKK!
ARGHH!
THE MUTANT SPEEDSTER, QUICKSILVER.
NOT FOR LONG, MY FRIEND--NOT FOR LONG!
BOOM!
UHHN!
WHAT'S THIS?
THE GROUND--
--?!


THIS ENCOUNTER HAS BEEN *EXTREMELY* ENTERTAINING, GENTLEMEN--
--BUT WE HAVE FRIENDS TO FIND ON THIS ISLAND--
--AND, QUITE FRANKLY, *YOU'RE* IN THE WAY!!
WHAM!
THAT TAKES CARE OF *THIS* SQUAD!
CRYSTAL?
I'M FINE.
JUST PROTECTING THESE VILLAGERS!
ZZAAT!
THEN LET'S PUT AN END TO--
BAM!
--THIS?

NATASHA-- LOOK!
ANOTHER ENERGY FLARE!
BY ATHENA'S EYE-- *NONE* OF THESE SOLDIERS ARE *HUMAN!*--
--BUT SOME TYPE OF ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCT!
ADAPTOIDS, ACTUALLY, HERCULES.
Hmm... THE KEMPLAR READINGS ARE GOING OFF THE SCALE!
"NATASHA--LOOK! THE A.I.M. AGENTS ARE HEADING INTO THE JUNGLE!"
LET THEM GO, CRYSTAL.
LET'S ATTEND TO THE VILLAGERS THEY WERE ATTACKING--
--WHILE I TRY TO *TRIANGULATE* CAP'S LOCATION FROM HIS IDENTI-CARD TRANSMISSION.

NATASHA, I KNOW YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT CAP--
AS I WOULD BE WITH ANY MISSING AVENGER, CRYS--
--BUT I THINK I'VE GOT A BEAD ON HIM!
LET'S MOVE IT, AVENGERS--
--NOW!
NATASHA --HOLD!
I WOULD FOLLOW YOU INTO THE MOUTH OF HELL ITSELF --BUT ONLY IF YOU TELL ME WHAT IT IS WE FACE.
FOR DAYS NOW, YOU'VE BEEN MUTTERING ABOUT THIS KEMPLAR SCALE! WHAT IN THE NAME OF ZEUS IS IT?!
VERY WELL, HERCULES. I GUESS YOU DESERVE TO KNOW.
IT IS A MEANS OF MEASURING THE ENERGY OUTPUT OF A VERY DANGEROUS OBJECT--A COSMIC CUBE.

THE CUBE?!
YES. THE MOST DANGEROUS WEAPON EVER DEVELOPED BY A.I.M.
AN OBJECT CAPABLE OF TRANSMUTING ANY HUMAN THOUGHT INTO REALITY...
...AND RIGHT NOW, THIS ISLAND IS SATURATED WITH CUBE RADIATION.
THE LESS YOU KNEW ABOUT THE CUBE--THOUGHT ABOUT THE CUBE--THE SAFER I BELIEVED YOU'D BE.
NOW YOU HAVE TO GUARD YOUR THOUGHTS AT EVERY MOMENT.
NATASHA--I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DIDN'T SHARE THIS INFORMATION!
YOU'RE TREATING US LIKE--
--CHILDREN?!
THIS CAMP?! DEAR GOD, I KNOW THIS CAMP!
I WOULD THINK YOU WOULD, PIETRO MAXIMOFF!
NOW COME AND GIVE YOUR FATHER A HUG. IT HAS BEEN A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I'VE SEEN YOU!


UP ISLAND...
MY HEAD'S SWIMMING... GOT TO TRY AND REMEMBER!
THERE WAS A WOMAN... YES, A HOODED WOMAN WHO GAVE ME SOMETHING THAT CURED MY PARALYSIS...
...AND I BLACKED OUT... AND THEN YOU APPEARED!
WHO ARE YOU? SOME SORT OF A.I.M. OPERATIVE ACTING OUT A SICK LITTLE CHARADE?
BUCKY BARNES DIED A LONG, LONG TIME AGO.
GENTLEMEN, MAY I SUGGEST WE MOVE ON?
THIS IS NOT A SAFE PLACE TO BE!
LISTEN TO THE KID, CAP--
--YOU'RE NOT SAFE AT ALL!
WHAT--?!
THE WAY HE BOUNCED OFF MY SHIELD, AS IF HE'D BEEN DOING IT FOR YEARS! I TRAINED BUCKY IN THAT MANEUVER!
THE WAY HE MOVES--JUST LIKE BUCKY DID! IT CAN'T BE!

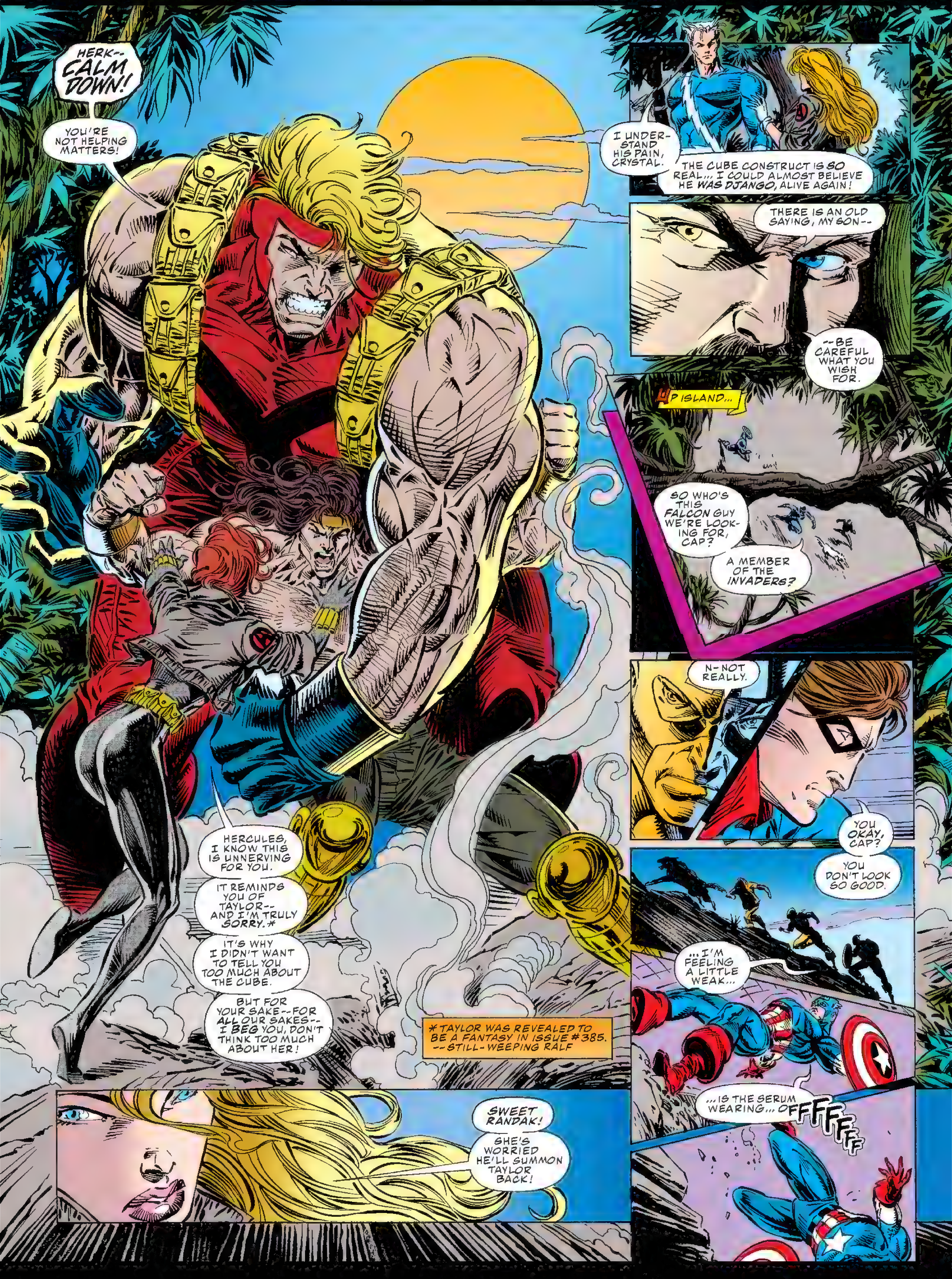
BOFF
BOFF
THESE GOONS WERE SNEAKING UP TO *AMBUSH* YOU, CAP!
AND I CAN'T ALLOW THAT!
THERE ARE OTHERS BEHIND YOU--!
FWIIIP!
SMKRASH
THANKS FOR THE ASSIST, PARTNER!
I DON'T BUY YOU ARE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE!
YOU'RE PROBABLY NOTHING MORE THAN ANOTHER FEVER HALLUCINATION...
...BUT I'M IN *NO* CONDITION TO TURN HELP DOWN.
I'VE *GOT* TO FIND SOME MISSING FRIENDS!
LOOK--ANOTHER ERUPTION!
THEY'VE BEEN *INCREASING* IN FREQUENCY. TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR THE MASTERS.

AND WITHIN THE COMPLEX...
PROJECT RESURRECTION STATUS REPORT: HUMAN ORGANIC SPECIMEN HAS BEEN PLACED IN RECEPTACLE.
BEGIN ORGAN-RECEPTACLE INTERFACE PROCEDURE.
VERY GOOD.
WHAT IS THE STATE ON THE AVENGERS' INCURSION?
ALL BUT ONE A.I.M. OPERATIVE IS ACCOUNTED FOR, AGENT BRANNEX.
THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE.
I WANT THAT OFF-LINE AGENT FOUND IMMEDIATELY.
THINGS ARE ENTERING A DELICATE STAGE. WE CAN AFFORD NO MORE SURPRISES.
HOW UNFORTUNATE FOR YOU, MR. BRANNEX--
--THAT THE RED SKULL CARES NOTHING FOR YOUR PATHETIC LITTLE SCHEMES.

AND JUST OUTSIDE THE COMPLEX...
...TWO OF CAPTAIN AMERICA'S OPERATIVES, FREE SPIRIT AND JACK FLAG, FIND THEMSELVES FACE-TO-FACE WITH SOME STARTLING A.I.M. AGENTS...
JACK-- LOOK OUT!
THAT BOZO'S CHANGED HIMSELF INTO THE RHINO--
OOOFFF!
KA-
POW
YOU SHALL NOT ENTER THE COMPLEX, HUMANS!

YOUR ATTEMPTS TO INTERFERE WITH PROJECT RESURRECTION WILL *NOT* BE TOLERATED!
SLASCK
SECURITY--THIS IS PATROL GAMMA EPSILON --THE INTRUDERS HAVE BEEN *NEUTRALIZED*.
THERE IS NO NEED TO CONTINUE ADAPTOID MODE AS WE BRING THEM IN FOR INTERROGATION.
THAT PSEUDO-KNOCKOUT ALMOST COST ME A FEW TEETH!
I'LL *DEAL* WITH HER--OR *IT*--AS SOON AS I FIND OUT WHAT THIS PROJECT RESURRECTION IS!

WHY DO YOU ALL LOOK SO FRIGHTENED, MY FRIENDS?
IF YOU ARE MY SON'S COMRADES, YOU ARE WELCOME IN MY CAMP!
I AM GLAD TO SEE PIETRO *HAS* SO MANY FRIENDS!
WHEN HE WAS A CHILD, I WORRIED ABOUT HIM-- HE WAS SO *SHY!*
NATASHA-- I UNDERSTAND NOW.
HE IS SO LIKE MY FOSTER FATHER... THIS IS TOO HARD! TOO *PAINFUL!*
AYE!
THIS POWER TO BRING MEMORY TO LIFE IS *CRUELTY* ITSELF! THAT THEY FEEL-- THAT THEY LAUGH --IS *UNBEARABLE!*
KA
BLAM


HERK-- CALM DOWN!
YOU'RE NOT HELPING MATTERS!
I UNDERSTAND HIS PAIN, CRYSTAL.
THE CUBE CONSTRUCT IS SO REAL... I COULD ALMOST BELIEVE HE WAS DJANGO, ALIVE AGAIN!
THERE IS AN OLD SAYING, MY SON--
--BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.
P ISLAND...
SO WHO'S THIS FALCON GUY WE'RE LOOKING FOR, CAP?
A MEMBER OF THE INVADERS?
N-NOT REALLY.
YOU OKAY, CAP?
YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.
...I'M FEELING A LITTLE WEAK...
...IS THE SERUM WEARING... OFFFFFFF
HERCULES, I KNOW THIS IS UNNERVING FOR YOU.
IT REMINDS YOU OF TAYLOR-- AND I'M TRULY SORRY.*
IT'S WHY I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU TOO MUCH ABOUT THE CUBE.
BUT FOR YOUR SAKE--FOR ALL OUR SAKES-- I BEG YOU, DON'T THINK TOO MUCH ABOUT HER!
* TAYLOR WAS REVEALED TO BE A FANTASY IN ISSUE #385. --STILL-WEEPING RALF
SWEET RANDAK!
SHE'S WORRIED HE'LL SUMMON TAYLOR BACK!

CAP--!!
HOLD ON, PARTNER!
I'VE GOT YOU!
Y-YOU ARE REAL?
AS REAL AS NEEDED.
CAPTAIN AMERICA-- LOOK OVER HERE.
I THINK WE HAVE FOUND YOUR FRIEND-- BUT I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE PLEASED.
FALCON!!

KA-BRASH!
AND SO IT ENDS, CAPTAIN AMERICA.
YOU CAME TO THIS ISLAND TO STOP A.I.M., BUT YOU COULD NOT STOP RESURRECTION--
--FOR MODOK LIVES AGAIN!!
TO BE CONTINUED IN CAPTAIN AMERICA #441-- AND THEN JOIN US HERE NEXT MONTH FOR THE SOUL-SEARING CONCLUSION!!

MARVEL COMICS
THE STAR-SPANGLED AVENGER
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CAPTAIN AMERICA
441
JUL '95
TAKING
A.I.M.
PART 3 OF 4
DAVE HOOVER

THROUGH THE PERILOUS FIGHT

I EXPECTED IT TO BE DIFFICULT WHEN I SET FOOT ON AIM ISLAND WITH THE PURPOSE OF SHUTTING DOWN THE CADRE OF WEAPONEERS WHO LIVE HERE ONCE AND FOR ALL.
I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO BE IMPOSSIBLE.
GRUENWALD -WRITES- HOOVER -DRAWS- BULANADI, HOOVER, HUDSON, R. HOOVER, AND WILLIAMS -INKS- ROSEN -LETTERS- POSELLA -COLORS- MACCHIO -EDITS- THANKS TO MOYER/SCUM -ART ASSIST.-
YET I'M FACED WITH THREE IMPOSSIBILITIES RIGHT NOW.
FIRST THERE'S THE RETURN OF MY ORIGINAL PARTNER BUCKY BARNES, DEAD NOW SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR TWO...
THEN THERE'S THE SUDDEN REAPPEARANCE OF MODOK, AIM'S DEADLIEST CYBORG OPERATIVE, WHOM I ALSO SAW DIE...
...AND FINALLY THERE'S ME--CAPTAIN AMERICA--MIRACULOUSLY MOVING AGAIN WITHOUT THE EXOSKELETON THAT COMPENSATED FOR THE TOTAL MUSCULAR ATROPHY THAT'S STRICKEN ME.

WISH I HAD TIME TO MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL, BUT MODOK'S ATTACKING!
AN ENERGY PULSE ERUPTING FROM HIS BROW... WHAT?
OUT OF THE WAY, CAP!
WHOOM
BUCKY?!?
HMH.
AS MUCH AS I WISHED HIM TO BE REAL--
--THE EVIDENCE IS BEFORE MY EYES!
HAVE TO BLIND MODOK BEFORE HE BLASTS AGAIN!
KEEP HIM DISTRACTED, CAP--!
HE'S CAUGHT MY SHIELD IN STASIS--
--BUT "BUCKY" HAS MANAGED TO CLAMBER UP ON TOP--
--DESPITE HIS GAPING CHEST CAVITY!

THIS NEW MODOK SEEMS TO HAVE NEW OFFENSIVE CAPACITIES--
--THERE'S SOME SORT OF PHANTOM ARM GROWING OUT OF HIS HEAD.
HE'S GOT "BUCKY"--
--AND HE'S STRAFING THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET, FORCING ME TOWARD THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF!
THIS ALTERCATION HAS BECOME TEDIOUS. AWAY WITH YOU!
DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS "BUCKY" IS, BUT HIS ACTIONS DID THE MEMORY OF THE ORIGINAL PROUD.
EASY, SON-- I'VE GOT YOU!
BUT WHO'S GOT ME?!?

THE HIGH-FLYING *FALCON*, ONE OF MY PARTNERS ON THIS VENTURE, LOOKING QUITE THE WORSE FOR WEAR.
SAM!
WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME ARE YOU DOING WITHOUT YOUR *ARMOR*, STEVE? I THOUGHT--
A WOMAN I BELIEVE TO BE *SUPERIA* GAVE ME A SHOT OF SOMETHING AND I WAS ABLE TO *MOVE* AGAIN!
YOUR *OLD ENEMY* SUPERIA?
SEEMS SO.
THEN SHE'S FOUND A *CURE* FOR YOUR SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM DETERIORATION?!?
DON'T KNOW.
WHAT ARE YOU *LOOKING* FOR?
BUCKY. YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM?
THE BUCKY THAT'S BEEN GONE FOR *DECADES?* UH, *NO.*
THERE ARE *WEIRD THINGS* GOING ON ON THIS ISLAND, SAM. WATCH YOURSELF.
SURE. NOW ABOUT THIS *CURE*...?

AIM'S COMMAND CENTER...
JACK FLAG AND I ARE SOMEWHAT NEW AT SUPERHEROING. BUT CAP IS COUNTING ON US TO DO OUR BIT, AND WE CAN'T LET HIM DOWN.
THE BEST WAY WE COULD FIGURE OUT TO GET INTO THIS HIGH SECURITY AREA--
--WAS TO LET THESE ANDROID-GUYS BEAT THE STUFFING OUT OF US IN HOPES THEY'D THEN TAKE US TO THEIR LEADER.
SEEMS TO BE WORKING! MAYBE WE HAVE A FUTURE IN THIS BUSINESS YET!
WE FOUND THESE TWO INTRUDERS LURKING OUTSIDE. THE FEMALE WAS REFERRED TO AS "SPIRIT," THE MALE "JACK."
YOU TWO ARE OUT OF UNIFORM. IF MR. BRANNEX SEES YOU--!
WE WERE BUSY. NOW ARE YOU SATISFIED?
DON'T BE FLIP WITH ME. WE'RE IN A CRISIS HERE.
WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS?
ENERGY FLARES ARE INCREASING IN FREQUENCY... WE'VE GOT MODOK ON LINE TO TRY TO REPAIR THE BREACH...
...THERE WAS AN INVASION OF AUTOMATONS THAT WE BELIEVE PROVIDED COVER FOR THE AVENGERS... THERE ARE INTRUDERS WE'VE YET TO IDENTIFY... 49 AGENTS HAVE GONE RENEGADE...
WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS.
OKAY, WE MADE IT IN--

--NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FIND A WAY TO *WRECK THE PLACE.*
LET'S *RESOLVE* WHAT WE CAN. THESE *INTRUDERS* ARE DRESSED AS SUPERHUMANS. SHOULD WE *ADAPT* THEM TO SEE WHAT THEY DO?
ARE *YOU* WILLING TO FOREGO YOUR CURRENT *ADAPTATION TEMPLATE?*
I WILL IF *YOU* WILL.
I SENSE I NOW HAVE SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH LEVEL 3...
INCREASED STAMINA, FLEXIBILITY, AND COORDINATION --THAT'S *IT* FOR THIS ONE.
I LIKED MY *OLD* TEMPLATE BETTER.
WHAT ARE THESE *PEOPLE* DOING HERE?!?
WE WERE JUST *INVESTIGATING* THEM, MR. BRANNEX!
YOU HAVE *COMPROMISED* THIS COMPOUND, AGENTS U31 AND L77. REMOVE THEM AT ONCE AND *ELIMINATE THEM.*
YESSIR!
NOW WHAT IS THIS? *MORE* INTERLOPERS?
I WAS NOT AWARE WE WERE HOLDING AN *EXPO!*
HMH! *SUPERIA* YET.
WHEN YOU'VE ELIMINATED YOUR PRISONERS, *YOU* WILL *HUNT* FOR THOSE TWO ON SCREEN 14!

OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND...
SNAPDRAGON-- WHAT IS IT?
SOMEONE'S *COMING!* AIM AGENTS--*FOUR* OF THEM!
TWO FOR ME, TWO FOR YOU!
WHO--?
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING,* SUPERIA?
DISTRIBUTING MY *DAMPING DISCS*-- FORGIVE THE ALLITERATION.
IT CAUSED THEM ALL TO STIFFEN AND *FALL OVER!*
YES, THE DISCS' CIRCUITRY NEUTRALIZES THE *ADAPTOIDS' POWER SOURCES.*
THESE BUCKETHEADS *AREN'T HUMAN*...?
BY MY CALCULATIONS, EVERY SINGLE AGENT OF A.I.M. IS ACTUALLY AN *ADAPTOID.*
WHOA.

MODOK'S DATABASE ENTRY 1107: THE ENERGY SOURCE FLARES APPEAR TO CAUSE THE NEARBY AIM OPERATIVES TO EXHIBIT WILDLY ABERRANT BEHAVIOR PATTERNS.
I CALCULATE A 97% PROBABILITY THAT IT IS OVERCHARGING THEIR ADAPTATION CHIPS WITH EXCESSIVE ENERGY.
THEY ARE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE RANKS. I MUST DEACTIVATE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THEIR CHIPS AND THEIR CYBER-NERVOUS SYSTEMS.
IT IS DONE.
NOW FOR THE COLUMN.
PERHAPS I CAN REINFORCE THE CONTAINMENT CYLINDER WITH BINDING PSIONIC ENERGY.
THE GROUND SHIFTS, EXPOSING MORE OF THE COLUMN BASE.
I AM ALLOWED EASIER EGRESS.
RRRMBLLL
I MUST CONTINUE TO BIND THE STRESS FRACTURES AND MAKE MY WAY TO THE VERY POINT SOURCE OF THE BREACH.
I AM AIM'S ULTIMATE OPERATIVE. IF I FAIL, EVEN AS MY PREDECESSOR MODAM SEEMS TO HAVE, THE ENTIRE CYLINDER WILL RUPTURE AND BOMBARD THIS PLANET WITH CHAOTIC EXTRADIMENSIONAL ENERGY.
I CALCULATE THAT EVENT TO BE APPROXIMATELY AN HOUR AWAY.

ELSEWHERE ON THE ISLAND...
AS FIELD COMMANDER OF THE AVENGERS, I SPLIT THE TEAM INTO SMALLER GROUPS. I HAVE HERCULES FLANKING ME.
OUR PURPOSE ON THIS ISLAND IS TWOFOLD: ONE) TO LOCATE AND ASSIST CAPTAIN AMERICA, WHO WE RECENTLY LEARNED WAS SUFFERING FROM A BREAKDOWN IN THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM THAT HAD ENHANCED HIS PHYSIQUE...
...AND TWO) TO INVESTIGATE THE STRANGE ENERGY PHENOMENON HERE, WHICH APPEARS IDENTICAL TO THE ONE WE FOUND IN THE YUKON, AND SHUT IT DOWN.
THE YUKON SITE LED US INTO A SKIRMISH WITH THE RED SKULL, BUT WE MANAGED TO ESCAPE. I WONDER IF THE SKULL WILL ALSO SHOW UP HERE.
WAIT-- IN THE CLEARING AHEAD-- A FIGURE IN RED--!
NATASHA! THIS WAY!
NO. NOT ME, TOO.
MY LONG-DEAD HUSBAND, ALEXI SHOSTOKOV, THE RED GUARDIAN...
...OR AN INCREDIBLE SIMULATION...
IS THAT--?
NO, HERCULES, THIS IS AN IMAGE PLUCKED FROM MY BRAIN, MADE VISIBLE BY THE WEIRD ENERGIES HERE--!
I KNOW WHERE CAPTAIN AMERICA IS. COME, I'LL TAKE YOU TO HIM.
NO YOU DON'T! YOU ARE A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION-- YOU COULD NOT KNOW SOMETHING I DO NOT!
ZAAAP

BEGONE!
EHHHH!
THAT--HURT. I'M GETTING THE IDEA YOU DO NOT LOVE ME ANYMORE.
HAS SOMEONE DISPLACED ME IN YOUR HEART, MY WIFE? WHO IS HE? TELL ME THE NAME OF MY RIVAL!
I'M NOT LISTENING TO YOU, PHANTOM.
I LET LOOSE WITH MY WIDOW'S BITE, EMPTYING CARTRIDGE AFTER CARTRIDGE INTO THE CRIMSON SPECTER...
HERCULES STANDS MUTELY BEHIND ME, LETTING ME DO WHAT I MUST DO.
PERHAPS HE'S MUSING ABOUT LOST LOVED ONES...
...AND WONDERING IF HE WOULD BE AS COMPELLED AS ME TO SLAY PHANTOMS OF THE PAST...
OF COURSE, HIS BEREAVEMENT IS MORE RECENT.
TAYLOR MADISON!

THE COMMAND CENTER...
SHOW YOURSELF, ALESSANDRO BRANNEX! I HAVE ELIMINATED ALL OF YOUR AGENTS. YOU HAVE NO OPTION LEFT BUT TO FACE ME!
THE RED SKULL, HMM? AM I SUPPOSED TO BE FLATTERED THAT YOU'VE SEEN FIT TO JOIN THE NUMEROUS INTERLOPERS INVADING OUR PEACEFUL ISLAND?
YOUR ATTEMPT AT SARCASM FAILS TO AMUSE.
PREPARE TO DIE, BRANNEX. THIS AIM FACILITY MUST BELONG TO THE RED SKULL!
DO YOUR WORST, NAZI.
YOU WILL SOON DISCOVER THAT I AM NO MERE HUMAN BEING LIKE YOURSELF--
--I AM THE SUPER-ADAPTOID!

I CAN *ADAPT* TO ANYTHING--*ANY* ENERGY DIRECTED AT ME--AND IT IS MINE THEREAFTER TO *CONTROL!*
ARE *YOU* IMMUNE TO THE FORCES YOU SO CASUALLY *WIELD*, SKULL? HMMM?
I THOUGHT *NOT.*
I COULD ADD *YOUR* ATTRIBUTES TO MY OWN AWESOME ARRAY... BUT YOUR *MEAGER GIFTS* DO NOT SEEM TO BE WORTH THE *EFFORT.*
A KILOMETER AWAY...
SO YOU THINK THIS UNDERGROUND PASSAGE HEADS TO THE *BREACH?*
IT'S HEADED IN THE *GENERAL DIRECTION*, PAL. I CAN BUT HOPE.
BUT WHAT ARE YOU GOING--
NNNH!
NO. DEAR GOD, TELL ME I'M NOT--
STEVE--?
WHAT'S *HAPPENED?*
THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM...
...SEIZING UP ON ME AGAIN!

YOU OKAY, MAN?
NO...
WHATEVER... WAS GIVEN... *WEARING OFF.* YOU'VE GOT TO... GET *ARMOR*...
PLEASE... GET--
FORGET IT, MAN. I'M NOT LEAVING THIS PIT *WITHOUT* YOU!
YOU *MUST*... BE *FASTER* WITHOUT...!
SORRY, STEVE. FRIENDS DON'T *DESERT* FRIENDS IN THE MIDDLE OF A *WARZONE.*
WE'RE *OUTTA* HERE.
THE COMMAND CENTER...
SO WHERE SHOULD WE *DISPOSE* OF THEM?
THE WASTE DISPOSAL UNIT ON SUBLEVEL B3, WHERE ELSE? HUMANS ARE QUITE *MESSY* WHEN NOT PROPERLY DISPOSED OF.

JACK, YOU WITH ME? GOOD!
A LITTLE TRIP-WIRE AND...!
HOLD THAT "DIS"-POSE, GREENY!
THESE GUYS AIN'T HUMAN--WE CAN DO WHATEVER WE WANT!
DON'T GET GROSS.
CAN'T HELP IT. ONCE WORKED AT A GROCERY.
BLASH
SPACK

SUCCESS! LET'S BOOGIE!
CAP WANTED US TO CRIPPLE THEIR SECURITY OPERATIONS--!
WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT ENOUGH PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES TO BLOW UP THINGS REAL GOOD!
ULP-- WAIT! THE RED SKULL!
YOUR POWERS ARE FORMIDABLE, ADAPTOID! BUT A MAN OF MY EXPERIENCE NEVER WALKS INTO ANY ENEMY STRONGHOLD UNPREPARED FOR EVERY CONTINGENCY!
MY BODY ARMOR IS PROOF AGAINST MY OWN ENERGIES--AND YOURS!
WE BLOW THIS PLACE AND WE WON'T JUST BE WASTING A SLEW OF ADAPTOIDS BUT THE SKULL, TOO!
WHO CARES? HE'S LIKE TOTAL EVIL.
BUT--!
ZVIT
ZVIT
ZVIT
HOLEE--!
THE FLOOR--!
ZVIT
ZVIT
ZVITCH
WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT, JACK! THE WHOLE PLACE IS GETTING SKEWERED!
WOW, IT'S LIKE WE WISHED THE PLACE TO BLOW--AND IT JUST STARTED--!

UP ISLAND...
IF YOU DO NOT *CARE* FOR ME ANYMORE, NATASHA, JUST TELL ME SO AND I WILL *RELEASE* YOU!
YOU ARE *NOT REAL*, ALEXI-- YOU ARE A *MANIFESTATION* OF MY SUBCONSCIOUS GIVEN SUBSTANCE BY THE *REALITY-SHIFTING ENERGIES* THAT *PERMEATE* THIS ISLAND--!
YOU STILL HAVE NOT SAID IF--
I *DO NOT CARE* FOR YOU, ALEXI! I *NEVER* LOVED YOU. OUR MARRIAGE WAS BASED ON *CONVENIENCE*, NOT AFFECTION!
OKAY. YOU *SAID* IT.
I GO.
ALEXI SHOSTOKOV IS A MAN OF *HIS WORD.*
NATASHA, I--I *SAW* HER--
YOU MEAN--
ZVITCH
THAT PHANTOM EX-HUSBAND OF MINE-- *SAVED MY LIFE!*
BUT *WHY*? WHERE IS THE LINE BETWEEN *FANTASY* AND *REALITY* HERE?

THE ENERGY BREACH...
SKIES LOOK LIKE A *LASER LIGHT SHOW*--I THINK THE ENERGY FROM THE FLARE IS STARTING TO *SCATTER!*
NEED... ARMOR...
OH, *SNAP!*
MORE OF THESE LAME-LIME *ADAPTOIDS* DECKED OUT AS SUPER-CRIMS!
MORE *FLYERS* NO LESS!
BELOW...
MADE IT WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A *NICK.* FANCY FOOTWORK, FREEBIE!
DON'T GET *COCKY,* JACK. MULTIPLE ENERGY FLARES ARE A *BAD THING*--
--IT MEANS WE'RE *LOSING* THE--!
LOOK!
THAT'S THE *FALCON*--AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEING *HASSLED!*
HE DROPPED SOMEBODY--*IT'S CAP!*

YOU SEE TO *THE MAN*--I'LL SHINNY UP A TREE AN' SEE IF I CAN DO ANYTHING FOR *FALC!*
CHECK!
CAP, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR *ARMOR?* WHY--
AWAY FROM HIM, GIRL!
OH, MY GAWD--!
THAT'S **SUPERIA.** SHE *MADE* ME WHAT I AM.
SHE *CAN'T* BE UP TO ANY GOOD.
SNAP-DRAGON?
I GOT HER.
YOU SEE TO *HIM!*

DO YOURSELF A FAVOR, FREE-- GO DOWN AND STAY DOWN!
THIS WOMAN-- KNOWS MY NAME? BUT HOW? I NEVER MET HER BEFORE, DID I?
SHE FIGHTS LIKE A DEMON!
BUT IF SHE THINKS I'M GOING TO LET CAP DOWN--!
IT'S ME. I'M BACK.
SO HOW'D MY SAMPLE WORK? MADE YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR OLD SELF, DIDN'T IT, CAPTAIN?
WELL, I'M PREPARED TO GIVE YOU THE FULL TREATMENT-- A CURE FOR YOUR CONDITION...
OF COURSE, I'LL EXPECT SOMETHING IN RETURN.

YOU'VE GOTTEN BETTER SINCE I LAST SAW YOU, SPIRIT. BUT I'VE BEEN TRAINED NOT ONLY BY CAP BUT HIS OPPOSITE--CROSSBONES.
DRAGON, COME! WE MUST GET HIM TO OUR VEHICLE!
THEN HE SAID YES--OHH!
THIS WHOLE ISLAND IS GOING UP! WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE FAST!
WE'RE JUST GOING TO LEAVE SPIRIT?
WE CAN'T MOVE THEM BOTH WITH ANY SEMBLANCE OF SPEED.
SUPERIA AND HER ACCOMPLICE LIFT ME LIKE I'M A BAG FULL OF HAMMERS. I HATE BEING THIS HELPLESS!
WAIT--THOSE LIPS, THAT NOSE--! THAT'S RACHEL LEIGHTON UNDER THAT GET-UP--DIAMONDBACK!
WHAT'S SHE DOING WORKING FOR SUPERIA?!?
I'VE GOT TO GET MY VOICE TO WORK SO I CAN--
ZVISH
CAP!
THE GROUND--!

THE BEACH...
SCANNERS INDICATE ALL *DEFENSE SYSTEMS* ARE OUT! WONDER IF IT WAS *OUR* TEAM'S DOING-- OR BECAUSE OF THAT *LIGHT SHOW?*
I JUST WISH CAP OR SOMEBODY WOULD *REPORT IN.* ALL THIS WAITING AROUND DOING *NOTHING* IS TYING MY INTESTINES IN KNOTS!
WE GOT OUR ORDERS, *FABE.* HE KNOWS WHERE *WE'LL* BE. WE'RE NOT TO SET FOOT OFF THE ESCAPE CRAFT--*NO MATTER WHAT!*
I KNOW, *ZACK.* I KNOW...
"...I JUST WISH I KNEW HOW CAP WAS *DOING!*"
WHOUUUH!
OH, *NO!*
CAAAP!
UNFFF!
OOGH!

FELT PRESSURE IN MY ABDOMEN...
...FELT GOOD TO FEEL SOMETHING... ANYTHING...
EVERYTHING'S WHITE NOW...WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...?
THOSE FLARES... WAS I HIT?
STILL CAN'T MOVE... GOD, HOW I WISH I HAD MY--
--ARMOR--!

THE ARMOR--IT'S ON! HOW?
IT'S LIKE I WISHED IT ON!
I CAN MOVE AGAIN--FLY--FEEL LIKE I CAN DO ANYTHING NOW!
THE WHOLE ISLAND IS BREAKING UP--FLARES ERUPTING EVERYWHERE!
THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME. I'M GOING IN.
LAST TIME I TRIED TO, MY ARMOR SHORTED... BUT SOMEHOW THIS TIME, I KNOW IT'LL BE DIFFERENT!
I'M IN!
AND THERE'S MODOK!
HELP ME...
CONCLUDED IN AVENGERS #388!

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES
AVENGERS
MARVEL COMICS
TAKING A.I.M.
PART 4 OF 4
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JUL 1995
388
MIKE DEODATO JR.
TOM PALMER

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

TAKING A.I.M.

PART 4 OF 4

INTO THE BREACH

BOB HARRAS & TERRY KAVANAGH
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MARK GRUENWALD
EDITOR IN CHIEF

DOG--DO YOU SEE?!
PROJECT RESURRECTION HAS FAILED. THE CONTAINMENT FIELD IS BREACHED!
WE ARE ALL DEAD MEN!

[redacted]

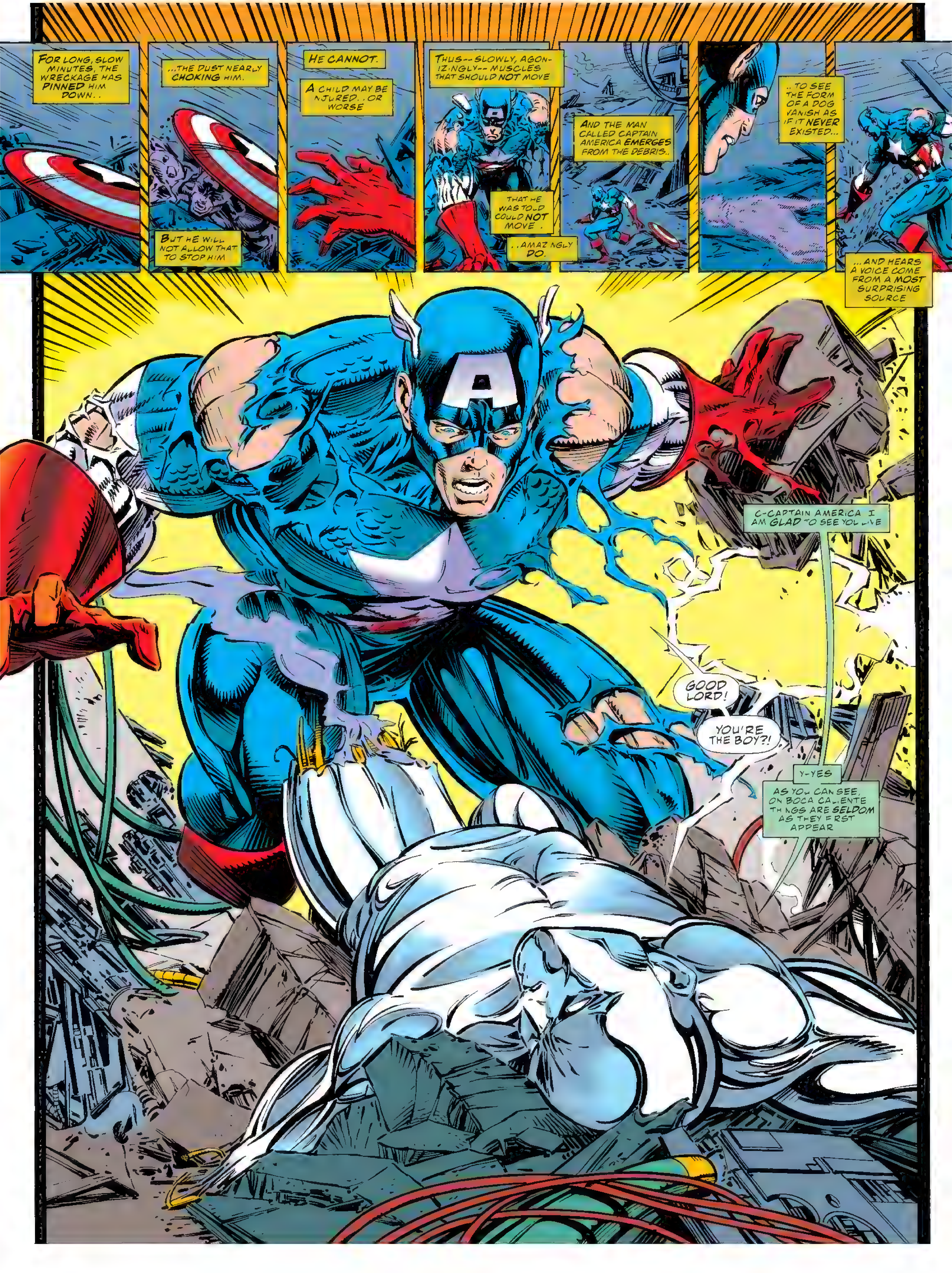
THAT RUMBLING--?
THIS ENTIRE COMPLEX IS ABOUT TO COLLAPSE!
OF COURSE IT IS, AVENGER.
WE WITNESS THE UNLEASHING OF THE AWESOME POWER CONTAINED IN THE MEREST FRAGMENT OF A COSMIC CUBE!
NO STRUCTURE MADE BY MAN CAN HOPE TO CONTAIN SUCH ENERGY! IT IS THE VERY STUFF OF CREATION!
CAPTAIN AMERICA--THE MODOK UNIT IS RIGHT!
THE COSMIC ENERGY IS BUILDING TO CRITICAL LEVELS. YOU MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE!
GOOD LORD! THE BOY WHO RESCUED ME--!
I'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF--
BOOOOOOOOOMM
TOO LATE.
ALL ACROSS THE SURFACE OF THE ISLAND KNOWN AS BOCA CALIENTE, THE GROUND CRUMBLES AND BUCKLES--
--AS EXPLOSIONS OF PURE COSMIC ENERGY BURST SKYWARD.
THE VERY ATMOSPHERE REACTS VIOLENTLY TO THIS SUDDEN, BRUTAL ASSAULT--
--AS HURRICANE-FORCE WINDS POUND THE BESIEGED ISLAND.

SEVERAL KILOMETERS DISTANT...
...THE BLACK WIDOW, HERCULES AND GIANT-MAN, THREE MEMBERS OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS...
...FIND THEMSELVES AT THE HEART OF A MAELSTROM.
BY SACRED OLYMPUS!
NEVER HAS THERE BEEN SUCH A--
--STO--
URRK!
WHUMP!
HANK! FIND SOMETHING TO HOLD ONTO!
I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, NATASHA!
HERK, YOU ALL RIGHT?
AYE! BUT I CAN BARELY HEAR YOU ABOVE THE SCREAMING OF THE--
--WINDS?
THE STORM IS OVER? AS SUDDENLY AS IT BEGAN?
THAT'S NOT THE HALF OF IT, AVENGER!
THE ISLAND?
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE ISLAND?!

"WE'RE SEEING IT AS IT REALLY IS, NATASHA."
"A VAST ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCT CREATED BY THE A.I.M. ADAPTOIDS. EVERYTHING ELSE WAS ILLUSION CAREFULLY MAINTAINED BY THE CUBE FRAGMENT."
THEN THE LOSS OF THE ILLUSION CAN ONLY MEAN SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG WITH THE ISLAND'S ENERGY SOURCE.
AVENGERS!
PIETRO AND CRYSTAL!
WE WERE GROWING CONCERNED.
PIETRO--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
JUST... A LITTLE... WINDED.
AVENGERS-- THE SKY!
LOOK AT THE SKY!
DID YOU SEE ANY SIGN OF CAP AND THE OTHERS, CRYS?
I'M AFRAID NOT, HANK.
WE WERE CAUGHT IN THAT SUDDEN STORM--

AND, AT THE SITE OF THE NOW-DESTROYED CENTRAL COMPLEX...
...THE NEWLY-BORN LIFEFORM **MODOK** EXPERIENCES AN EMOTION **ALIEN** TO HIS PROGRAMMING--
--WONDERMENT.
THE LAST CONTAINMENT FIELD HAS FAILED. THE FRAGMENT-- AND ALL ITS POWER-- **UNLEASHED**.
AS OUR SCIENTISTS THEORIZED, THE POWER SURGE HAS OPENED A TRANS-DIMENSIONAL WARP-- A **HOLE** IN THE FABRIC OF REALITY!
LOOK AT THE OCEANS --THE WARP IS PLAYING HAVOC WITH THE GRAVIMETRIC FIELDS IN THE QUADRANT SURROUNDING THE ISLAND. SOON IT WILL PULL **EVERYTHING** INTO ITS MAW.
MY CREATORS HOPED THAT I COULD SEAL THE BREACH.
INDEED, I WAS RE-CREATED **SPECIFICALLY** TO ACCOMPLISH THAT GOAL, BUT EVENTS HAVE **PRECLUDED** THE POSSIBILITY OF MY CARRYING OUT MY PROGRAMMING...
...OR HAVE THEY?
THEORETICALLY, THE WARP IS AN OPENING TO THE DIMENSION OF THE CUBE'S **ORIGIN**.
IT IS **ILLOGICAL** TO EXPECT TO CONTROL SOMETHING WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING ITS ORIGINS.
THUS, IT IS **INCUMBENT** UPON ME IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WISHES OF MY CREATORS TO JOURNEY--
--INTO THAT UNKNOWN PLACE THAT THEY HAVE NAMED THE **BEYOND**.

ELSEWHERE IN THE RUINED COMPOUND...
HE WAS IN THE COMPLEX WHEN THE DISASTER STRUCK.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE HE SURVIVED!
WOMAN--IF YOU LEARN ONE THING IN LIFE, LEARN THIS WELL--
--ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WHEN IT CONCERNS--
--THE RED SKULL!
NOW TELL ME--WHAT OF THE OTHERS? HAVE YOU FOUND ANY EVIDENCE OF THEIR PRESENCE?
WHAT'S THIS? IS THAT FEAR I SEE IN YOUR EYES?
I--I SAW WHAT HAPPENED IN CANADA, HERR SKULL!
THIS IS WORSE! A RIFT HAS OPENED! WE CANNOT SURVIVE!
YOU ARE FRIGHTENED BY WHAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND...
...AND BECAUSE YOU KNOW FEAR, YOU ARE OF NO USE TO ME!
GO! TRY AND ESCAPE THE MAELSTROM--
--WHILE THE SKULL SEEKS TO FIND HIS DESTINY!


FOR LONG, SLOW MINUTES, THE WRECKAGE HAS PINNED HIM DOWN..
...THE DUST NEARLY CHOKING HIM.
BUT HE WILL NOT ALLOW THAT TO STOP HIM
HE CANNOT.
A CHILD MAY BE INJURED.. OR WORSE
THUS-- SLOWLY, AGONIZINGLY-- MUSCLES THAT SHOULD NOT MOVE
THAT HE WAS TOLD COULD NOT MOVE.
..AMAZINGLY DO.
AND THE MAN CALLED CAPTAIN AMERICA EMERGES FROM THE DEBRIS..
.. TO SEE THE FORM OF A DOG VANISH AS IF IT NEVER EXISTED...
...AND HEARS A VOICE COME FROM A MOST SURPRISING SOURCE
C-CAPTAIN AMERICA I AM GLAD TO SEE YOU LIVE
GOOD LORD!
YOU'RE THE BOY?!
Y-YES
AS YOU CAN SEE, ON BOCA CALIENTE THINGS ARE SELDOM AS THEY FIRST APPEAR

ELSEWHERE...
THE WINDS ARE PICKING UP AGAIN. IT'S AS IF EVERYTHING WAS BEING SUCKED INTO THAT VORTEX IN THE SKY!
PIETRO! CRYSTAL! FABIAN'S SHIP HAS LANDED ON THE BEACH!
HELP IN THE EVACUATION OF THE ISLANDERS. THEY'RE IN A STATE OF SHOCK.
AND WHO CAN BLAME THEM?
HANK, YOU'RE WITH ME.
WE'RE NOT LEAVING THIS ISLAND WITHOUT STEVE.
YOU WON'T GET ANY ARGUMENT FROM ME, NATASHA. LET'S MOVE IT!
IF YOU GUYS ARE LOOKING FOR CAP, COUNT ME IN.
GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US, FALCON.
YEAH, WELL-- Y'KNOW, ONCE AN AVENGER, ALWAYS AN AVENGER!

HIS EYES SWIM. AND HIS VISION DIMS.
HIS KNEES BUCKLE. HIS ARMS GROW WEAK.
THE PARALYSIS THAT WILL CLAIM HIS LIFE IS RETURNING--BUT STILL CAPTAIN AMERICA CANNOT CONTAIN HIS SHOCK.
Y-YOU WERE AN ADAPTOID ALL ALONG?!
YES.
I-- I WAS CAUGHT IN ONE OF THE FIRST ENERGY WAVES... AND TRANSFORMED.
I HAD BEEN BUILT TO KEEP GUARD OVER THE ISLAND'S HUMAN POPULATION. WE WERE TO USE THEM AS LIVING SHIELDS AGAINST ANY OUTSIDE ATTACK.
BUT IN MY CHARGES, I SAW SOMETHING I COULD NEVER HAVE IN MY EXISTENCE.
I SAW IN HUMANITY THE POSSIBILITY OF THE INFINITE, PERHAPS THE DIVINE... AND I ENVIED IT.
AND WHEN THE CITADEL FIRST FLARED, MY ENVY BECAME REALITY.

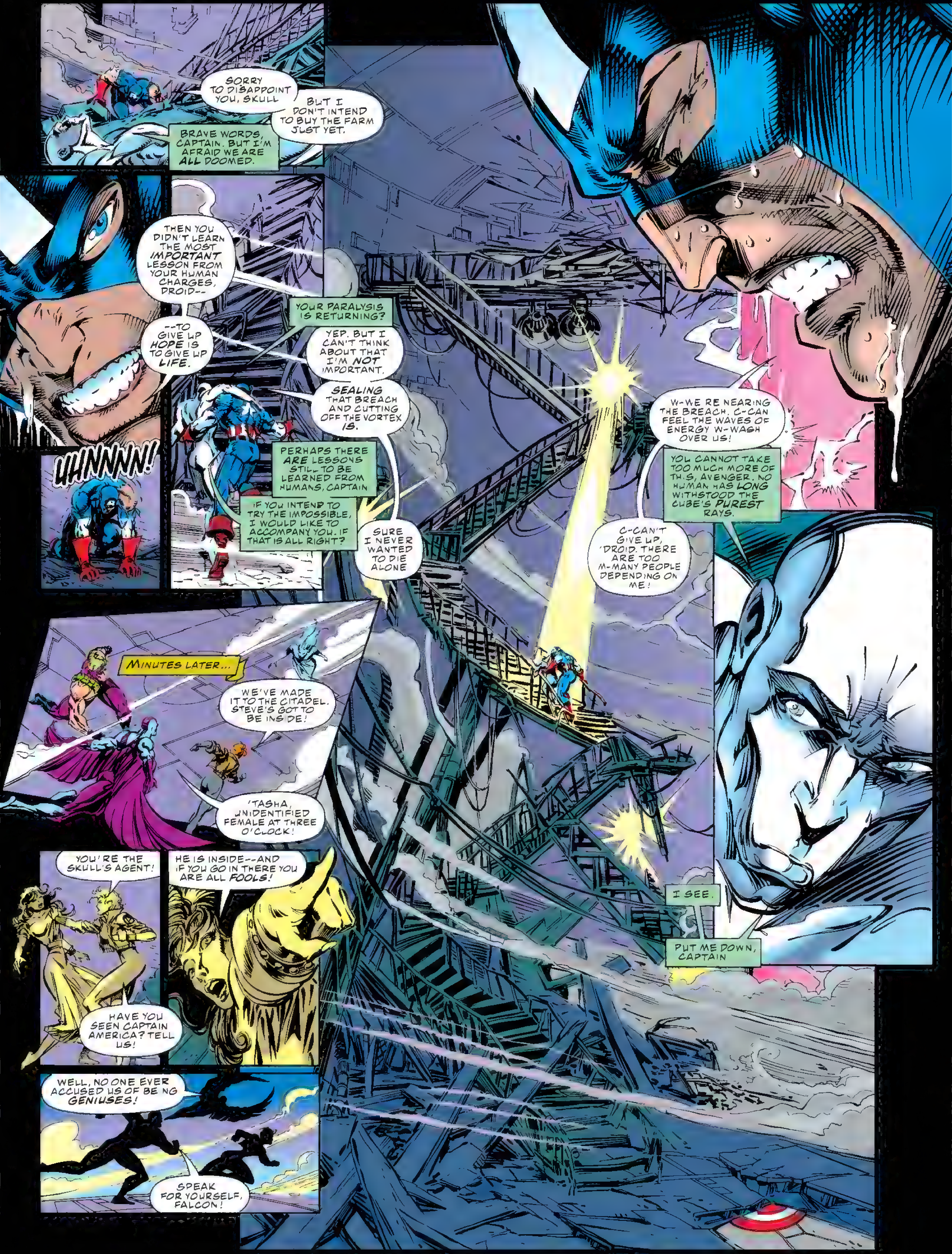
BUT IT WAS *ALL* FOR NOTHING. IF THE ENERGY VORTEX IS NOT CONTAINED, *ALL* REALITY WILL BE SUCKED INTO THE *BEYOND*.
THEN WE CANNOT *ALLOW* THAT TO HAPPEN--
--NOW, CAN WE?
SUPERIA?!
YES, CAPTAIN.
BUT *LOOK* AT YOU, AVENGER. SO WEAK--SO HELPLESS.
THE ADRENALINE THAT HELPED YOU *TEMPORARILY* OVERCOME YOUR FATE HAS FADED, HASN'T IT?
HOW *FRUSTRATING* FOR A MAN LIKE YOU--A *HERO* AMONG HEROES--TO WITHER AND FADE AS THE WORLD LITERALLY FALLS APART ABOUT YOU.
WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE TO *BE* A HERO AGAIN, CAPTAIN AMERICA?
WOULD IT BE A PIECE OF YOUR *SOUL*?!

AND ON THE ARTIFICIAL ISLAND'S SHORE...
QUICKLY! QUICKLY!
WE MUST NOT ALLOW ONE INNOCENT BE HARMED ON THIS HELLISH PLACE!
FABIAN'S GOT THE FIRST PLANELOAD OF REFUGEES OUT OF HERE, HERCULES--
--BUT SCANNERS INDICATE THAT VORTEX IS AFFECTING GRAVIMETRIC FORCES FOR MILES AROUND. IT'S AS IF THE VERY OCEAN FLOOR WAS BEING PULLED UP.
THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT COULD HAPPEN NEXT!
THEN I SUGGEST WE BE QUICK ABOUT OUR WORK, eh?
AND NO PUN INTENDED, MY FRIENDS-- JUST HONEST, HEALTHY FEAR.

D'YOU HEAR THAT, JACK?
IF AN AVENGER CAN BE AFRAID-- I THINK I HAVE A RIGHT TO BE TERRIFIED OUTTA MY SOCKS!
I GOT YOU, SPIRIT-- BUT HOW WE FEEL DOESN'T MATTER, AS LONG AS WE GET THE JOB DONE.
JACK--LOOK OVER THERE...
"...DOESN'T SHE LOOK FAMILIAR?!"
THERE ARE ENOUGH OF US HERE!
WE NEED TO GO BACK AND FIND CAP!
YOU'RE CAP'S FRIEND, RACHEL, AREN'T YOU?
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT ON THIS ISLAND, BUT IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT CAP, YOU'D KNOW THAT HE'D INSIST OUR FIRST DUTY WAS TO THESE CHILDREN!
SO I SUGGEST YOU SHUTUP AND HELP OUT!

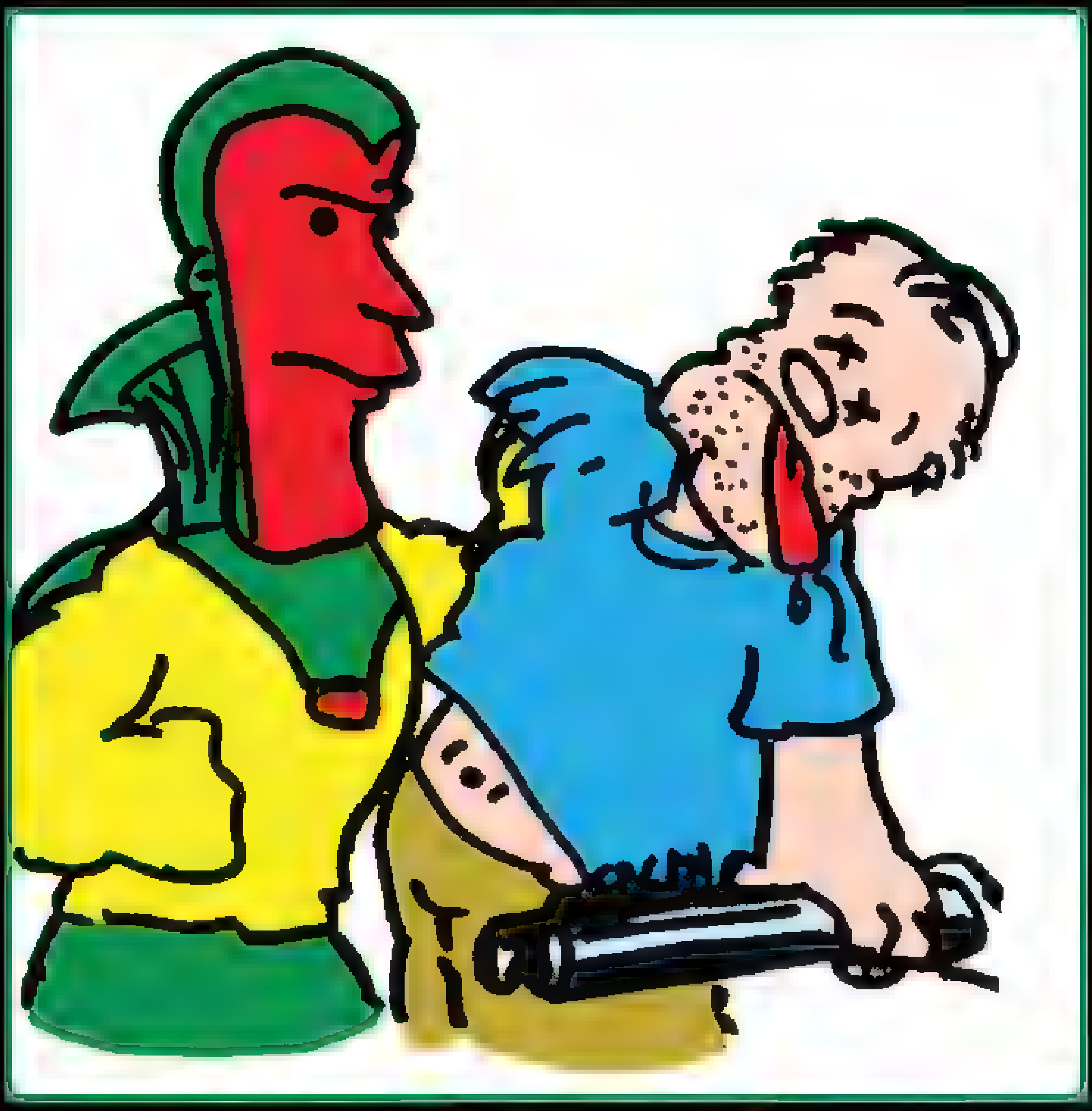
"YOU SEE THIS GOLDEN LIQUID, CAPTAIN?
"IT IS YOUR *SALVATION!*
"TASTE OF IT... AND THE LONG NIGHTMARE WILL BE OVER..."
...AND YOU WILL BE *CURED!*
AND FOR THIS, I *ASK* NOTHING...
...EXCEPT A DEBT OF HONOR TO BE NAMED AT A LATER DATE.
LADY--
--NO DEAL!!
FLLIIP!
Ah, MY ANCIENT NEMESIS, YOU *ARE* A FOOL.
WHAT YOU *DISCARD*, I *EMBRACE!*
SUPERIA, YOUR HANDIWORK IS *MINE!*

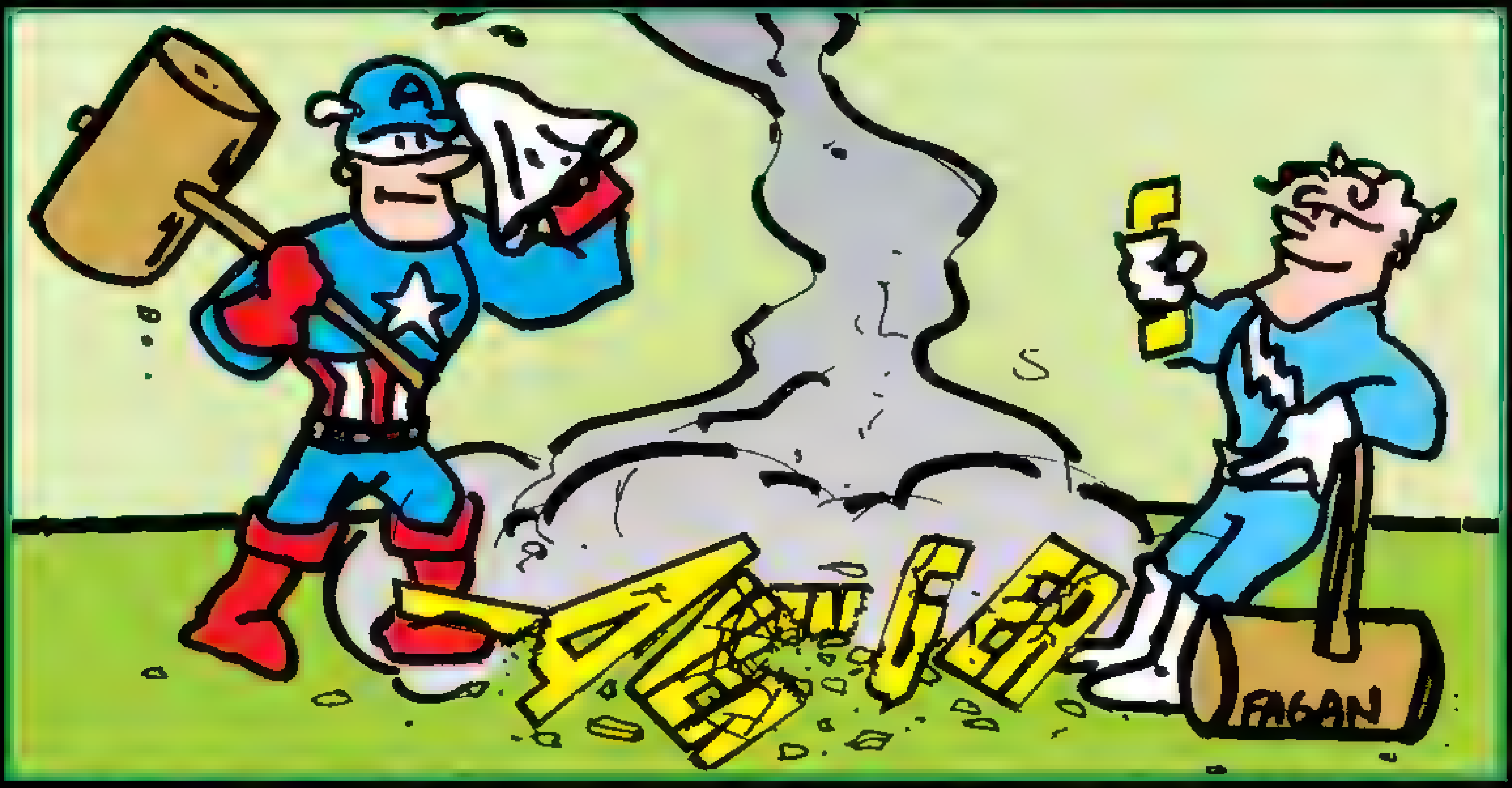
WITH YOUR SERUM *COURSING* THROUGH MY VEINS--
--I AM *SPARED* CAPTAIN AMERICA'S FATE!
SFFAKKT!
AIIEE!
AND TO *INSURE* THE SINGULARITY OF MY GOOD FORTUNE, SUPERIA--
--I DEEM YOU *SUPERFLUOUS*.
YOU CANNOT STOP ME, CAPTAIN. YOU CAN NEVER STOP ME AGAIN.
THINK OF THAT AS YOU *DIE!*
SKULL-- *NO!!*
FZZZMM


SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, SKULL.
BUT I DON'T INTEND TO BUY THE FARM JUST YET.
BRAVE WORDS, CAPTAIN. BUT I'M AFRAID WE ARE **ALL** DOOMED.
THEN YOU DIDN'T LEARN THE MOST **IMPORTANT** LESSON FROM YOUR HUMAN CHARGES, DROID--
--TO GIVE UP **HOPE** IS TO GIVE UP **LIFE.**
UHNNNN!
YOUR PARALYSIS IS RETURNING?
YEP. BUT I CAN'T THINK ABOUT THAT. I'M **NOT** IMPORTANT.
SEALING THAT BREACH AND CUTTING OFF THE VORTEX **IS.**
PERHAPS THERE **ARE** LESSONS STILL TO BE LEARNED FROM HUMANS, CAPTAIN.
IF YOU INTEND TO TRY THE IMPOSSIBLE, I WOULD LIKE TO ACCOMPANY YOU. IF THAT IS ALL RIGHT?
SURE. I NEVER WANTED TO DIE ALONE.
W-WE'RE NEARING THE BREACH. C-CAN FEEL THE WAVES OF ENERGY W-WASH OVER US!
YOU CANNOT TAKE TOO MUCH MORE OF THIS, AVENGER. NO HUMAN HAS **LONG** WITHSTOOD THE CUBE'S **PUREST** RAYS.
C-CAN'T GIVE UP, 'DROID. THERE ARE TOO M-MANY PEOPLE DEPENDING ON ME!
I SEE.
PUT ME DOWN, CAPTAIN.
MINUTES LATER...
WE'VE MADE IT TO THE CITADEL. STEVE'S GOT TO BE INSIDE!
'TASHA, UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE AT THREE O'CLOCK!
YOU'RE THE SKULL'S AGENT!
HAVE YOU SEEN CAPTAIN AMERICA? TELL US!
HE IS INSIDE--AND IF YOU GO IN THERE YOU ARE ALL **FOOLS!**
WELL, NO ONE EVER ACCUSED US OF BEING **GENIUSES!**
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, FALCON!

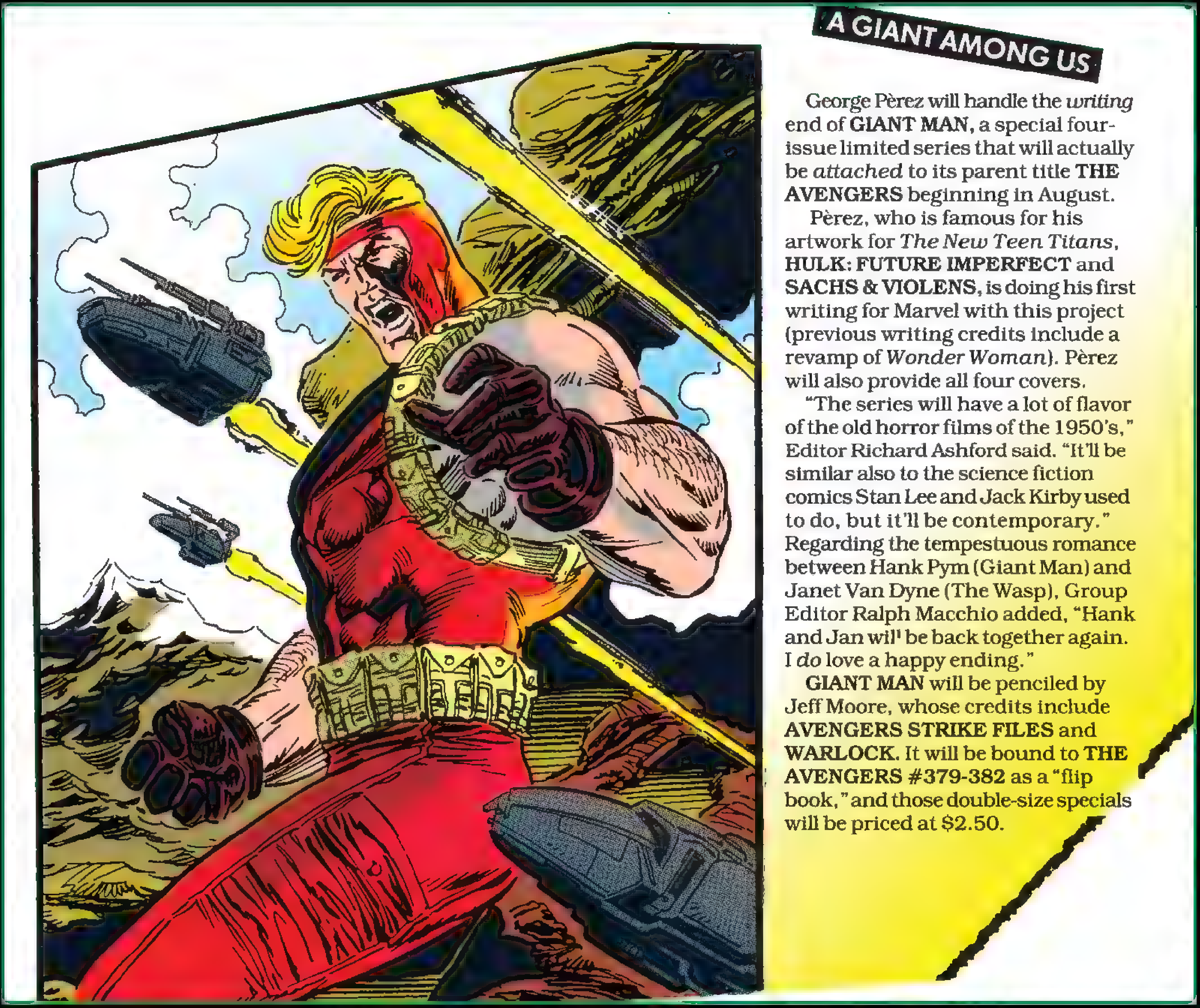
W-WHAT?
LIKE YOU, I APPROACH THE *END* OF MY EXISTENCE.
THE DAMAGE I SUFFERED IN THE EXPLOSION IS *IRREPARABLE.*
I WOULD LIKE TO *ACCOMPLISH* SOMETHING WITH MY END.
IF THE BREACH IS TO BE CLOSED, PERHAPS I CAN DO IT...
...BY ADAPTING MY FORM INTO THAT OF THE CONTAINING WALL.
BUT SUCH A *TOTAL* ADAPTATION WILL TAKE *ALL* MY LIFE ENERGIES. I WILL LOSE ALL ABILITY FOR *SENTIENT* THOUGHT.
WHO KNOWS? PERHAPS WITH THIS FINAL DEED-- IF I *TRY* THE IMPOSSIBLE-- I WILL TOUCH THE INFINITE...
...AND KNOW THE DIVINE.
I HOPE YOU DO, MY FRIEND. I HOPE YOU DO.
LIKE LIQUID MERCURY, THE BEING THAT *WAS* AN AIM ADAPTOID FLOWS ACROSS THE RUPTURED CEILING--
--REPAIRING THE DAMAGE--
--AND *HOLDING* BACK THE AWESOME ENERGIES BEHIND THE CONTAINING WALL ONCE MORE.
AND IN THE AFTERMATH, A WOUNDED, WEAKENED AVENGER STAGGERS...
...AND FALLS.
AND AS THE FLOOR RACES UP TO MEET HIM, CAPTAIN AMERICA *ACCEPTS* HIS FATE...

...PERHAPS A BIT PRE-MATURELY.
STEVE --DON'T WORRY!
I GOT YOU!
WOOMP!
UNFF! N-NOW IF SOMEONE COULD LEND A HELPING HAND?
YOU ASKED FOR IT, SAM?
YOU GOT IT!
I'LL ADMIT, YOU GUYS DO COME IN HANDY FROM TIME TO TIME.
STEVE-- THANK HEAVEN!
YOU DID IT, MY FRIEND!
YOU SAVED US ALL!
N-NOT ME, WIDOW.
"ALL I DID WAS HELP SOMEONE FIND HIS DREAM."
NEXT MONTH: MANDROIDS! GYRICH! MAYHEM! DEATHCRY!
"MESSAGE FROM HOME!"





AVENGERS #378-379 LETTERS-PAGE CARTOONS BY CHRIS FAGAN



A GIANT AMONG US

George Pèrez will handle the *writing* end of **GIANT MAN**, a special four-issue limited series that will actually be *attached* to its parent title **THE AVENGERS** beginning in August.

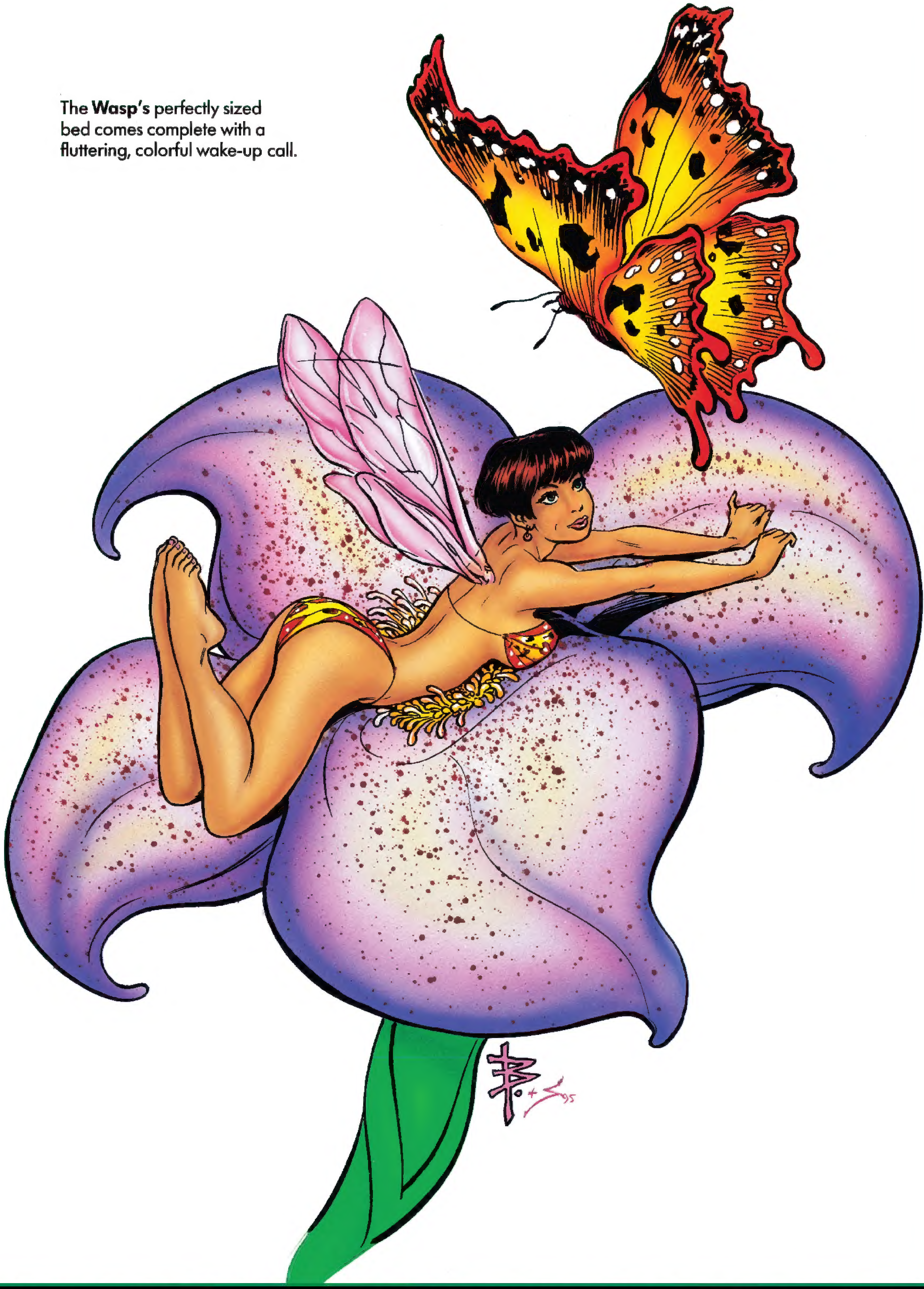
Pèrez, who is famous for his artwork for *The New Teen Titans*, **HULK: FUTURE IMPERFECT** and **SACHS & VIOLENS**, is doing his first writing for Marvel with this project (previous writing credits include a revamp of *Wonder Woman*). Pèrez will also provide all four covers.

"The series will have a lot of flavor of the old horror films of the 1950's," Editor Richard Ashford said. "It'll be similar also to the science fiction comics Stan Lee and Jack Kirby used to do, but it'll be contemporary." Regarding the tempestuous romance between Hank Pym (Giant Man) and Janet Van Dyne (The Wasp), Group Editor Ralph Macchio added, "Hank and Jan will be back together again. I *do* love a happy ending."

GIANT MAN will be penciled by Jeff Moore, whose credits include **AVENGERS STRIKE FILES** and **WARLOCK**. It will be bound to **THE AVENGERS #379-382** as a "flip book," and those double-size specials will be priced at $2.50.

MARVEL AGE #139 ARTICLE BY TERRY HERNON

The **Wasp's** perfectly sized bed comes complete with a fluttering, colorful wake-up call.



MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #4 PINUP BY BRET BLEVINS & TOM SMITH • TEXT BY PAULA FOYE & ROB TOKAR

Long days of avenging wrongs earn **Black Widow** a wind-down.

MARVEL SWIMSUIT SPECIAL #4 PINUP BY MIKE DEODATO JR. & TOM SMITH • TEXT BY PAULA FOYE & ROB TOKAR

AVENGERS: ULTRON UNBOUND TPB **BACK COVER BY STEVE EPTING & MATT MILLA**

EVIL
REBORN!

Will Vision, Swordsman, Magdalene and Deathcry survive the mind-altering madness of the Mephisitoid? And on Wundagore Mountain, Crystal and Quicksilver find Pietro's childhood nanny, Bova, on her deathbed! Can the High Evolutionary save her? Meanwhile, Giant-Man has big problems — and so does anyone else who has used Pym Particles! And when Vision is haunted by dreams that seem like memories, everything he knows about humanity is about to be challenged! Plus: There's more to Taylor Madison, Hercules' mortal girlfriend, than meets the eye. Prepare for a Greek tragedy! And when Captain America's bitter enemy the Red Skull resurfaces, seeking a prize beyond measure, it could spell the end of the Avengers! It's a shocking saga featuring A.I.M., the Cosmic Cube, the Super-Adaptoid and M.O.D.O.K.!

AVENGERS #378-388, MARVEL DOUBLE FEATURE: AVENGERS/GIANT-MAN #379-382,
VISION #1-4 & CAPTAIN AMERICA #440-441

VOLUME
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